

# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

## Monterey, California



### THESIS

**THE WAR IN BOSNIA, 1992-1995:  
ANALYZING MILITARY ASYMMETRIES AND  
FAILURES**

by

Gheorghe Anghel

June 2000

Thesis Advisor:  
Co-Advisor:

David Yost  
Donald Abenheim

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

20000802 197

<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>			<i>Form Approved</i> <i>OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
<p>Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.</p>				
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)</b>		<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> June 2000	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's Thesis	
<b>TITLE AND SUBTITLE :</b> The War in Bosnia, 1992-1995: Analyzing Military Asymmetries and Failures			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Gheorghe Anghel				
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A			<b>10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution unlimited			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b>	
<b>13. ABSTRACT</b>  <p>This thesis analyzes the three key failures by the leading external powers in their efforts in 1992-1995 to manage the crisis in Bosnia and impose a settlement. Except for Russia, these leading powers were the so-called NATO Quad: Britain, France, Germany, and the United States. When these powers initially intervened, they failed to comprehend the origins and dynamics of the Yugoslav crisis. These powers successively failed to prevent the outbreak of the fighting, then to properly contain it, and finally to achieve a stable and enduring settlement when the chance presented itself in 1995.</p> <p>The thesis concludes that the failures stemmed from incorrect assessments, a lack of political will, and organizational shortcomings. Because of these failures, the Bosnian conflict remains unsettled, and the current stalemate hinges on continuing political-military commitments by the external powers.</p>				
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnians, Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Muslims, IFOR, SFOR			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 105	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b>  Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b>  Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b>  Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b>  UL	

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited

**THE WAR IN BOSNIA, 1992-1995:  
ANALYZING MILITARY ASYMMETRIES AND FAILURES**

Gheorghe Anghel  
Lieutenant Commander, Romanian Ministry of National Defense  
B.A., Romanian Higher Military Academy, 1991

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

from the

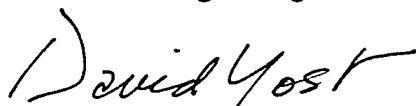
**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
June 2000**

Author:



Gheorghe Anghel

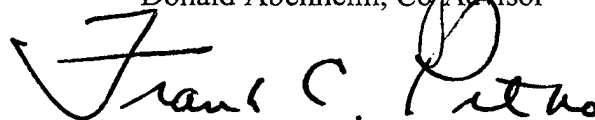
Approved by:



David Yost, Thesis Advisor



Donald Abenheim, Co-Advisor



Frank C. Petho, Chairman  
Department of National Security Affairs

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis analyzes the three key failures by the leading external powers in their efforts in 1992-1995 to manage the crisis in Bosnia and impose a settlement. Except for Russia, these leading powers were the so-called NATO Quad: Britain, France, Germany, and the United States. When these powers initially intervened, they failed to comprehend the origins and dynamics of the Yugoslav crisis. These powers successively failed to prevent the outbreak of the fighting, then to properly contain it, and finally to achieve a stable and enduring settlement when the chance presented itself in 1995.

The thesis concludes that the failures stemmed from incorrect assessments, a lack of political will, and organizational shortcomings. Because of these failures, the Bosnian conflict remains unsettled, and the current stalemate hinges on continuing political-military commitments by the external powers.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The dissolution of the USSR and the Warsaw Treaty in 1991 gave birth to a new international security environment that can be best described as one of multiple scenarios whose chief feature is *uncertainty*. The wars are now distinctly different from those of the immediate past. The world has entered an era, not of peaceful economic competition, but of confrontation between ethnic and religious groups. Unfortunately, the leading Western powers proved unprepared to deal with the Bosnian challenge in 1992.

The thesis analyzes the responses of the leading Western powers to the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia. The initial chapters analyze Bosnian history from the sixth century up to the Titoist period in Yugoslavia. At first glance the long chain of fratricidal wars, victims, and refugees seems to support the "ethnic hatreds" theory that some Western politicians have favored as an explanation for the Bosnian war. Yet the violence in Bosnian history has been rather "normal " compared with that in the histories of other European countries in the same historical periods. The period from Tito's death in 1980 to the present has featured a long chain of atrocities committed by the Bosnian Serbs, Croats, and Muslims and the active involvement of Serbia and Croatia in the war that took place on Bosnian territory until 1995, when the interested external powers — mainly the key NATO powers — finally took measures to bring the crisis to an end.

The thesis also analyzes the Western failures in the Bosnian crisis from an organizational perspective. It employs a five-step analytical process. The first step identifies the failure itself by using counterfactual analysis. The second identifies the unfulfilled critical tasks that led to misfortune. The third conducts a layered analysis that focuses on different levels of decision-making and action and examines the behavior and the relationships among these echelons that caused failures. Selecting the relevant echelons is a sensitive issue since no rules apply in dealing with matters that entail so many specificities in each case. Also, such a matrix can easily get over-populated by key circumstances and cross-references to relationships among levels and actors at the same level of analysis. To deal with these challenges, the thesis presents a simplified chart that displays the three general levels Samuel Huntington has proposed to explain the relationships among parties in fault line conflicts. Consequently, the analysis focuses on



the behavior and the relationships among key national actors (such as the United States, France, Britain, and Germany), international organizations (such as the UN, the EU, the OSCE, and NATO), countries that supported the warring parties (such as Croatia and Serbia), and the warring parties themselves. Within each of these general levels the analysis covers the behavior and the relationships among decision-makers and personnel in the field (such as heads of international organizations and their representatives, presidents, high officials, military commanders, and intelligence community officials).

Based on this analysis, the fourth and the fifth steps build and interpret a matrix that represents graphically the pathways that led the Western powers to failure. The matrix also displays, in a simplified way, the essential tasks these powers might have undertaken to avoid failure. Three major failures in succession are thus identified. The first was a failure to prevent the Yugoslav crisis from breaking out and then escalating in early 1992. The second was a failure to understand the specificity of the Bosnian war's origins and dynamics; this led to mismanagement of the crisis between 1992 and 1995. The third was a failure to seize the opportunity to bring an enduring peace to Bosnia.

The analysis of the three failures is the story of a victory of power over justice. The resulting status quo is not peace but the artificially imposed absence of war. The West has treated effects instead of dealing with causes. The price has been high and has cast doubt on the indefinite continuation of the Western military presence that preserves the fragile settlement of Dayton. The parties agreed to stop hostilities only under considerable U.S. pressure, and informed experts agree that they will resume the war when such pressure disappears.

Thus the overall success of the international intervention depends on the answers to two general questions. First, will the West be willing to extend its costly military presence in Bosnia indefinitely? Second, will the West be capable of continuing to impose peace in Bosnia should other military contingencies arise elsewhere in the world?

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. RESTLESS BOSNIA.....	5
A. FIRST SETTLERS .....	6
B. TRADITIONAL REGIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE IDENTITY OF BOSNIA .....	7
C. A BOSNIAN NATION?.....	12
D. SHIFTING ALLIANCES AND FRATRICIDE FIGHTS.....	15
E. VIOLENCE IN BOSNIAN HISTORY.....	19
III. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS .....	25
A. BOSNIA FROM TITO'S DEATH TO THE 1991 ELECTIONS.....	25
B. BOSNIAN INDEPENDENCE PROCESS .....	27
1. The Process of Bosnian <i>de jure</i> Independence (1991-April 1992).....	28
a. Bosnian Political-Military Developments.....	28
b. International Political-Military Developments .....	29
2. Western Failure (early 1992-early 1994) .....	30
a. Bosnian Political-Military Developments.....	30
b. International Political-Military Developments .....	34
3. Toward Conflict Resolution in Bosnia (early 1994-late 1995).....	37
a. Bosnian Political-Military Developments.....	37
b. International Political-Military Developments .....	40
C. POST-DAYTON DEVELOPMENTS IN BOSNIA (SINCE DECEMBER 1995).....	44
IV. A FAILURE OF THE WEST .....	49
A. A FAILURE TO ANTICIPATE .....	52
1. What Was the Failure?.....	52
2. Critical Failures.....	53
3. Layered Analysis.....	56
B. A FAILURE TO LEARN .....	61
1. What Was the Failure?.....	61
2. Critical Failures.....	63
3. Layered Analysis.....	70
C. A FAILURE TO ADAPT .....	78
1. What Was the Failure?.....	78

2. Critical Failures.....	80
3. Layered Analysis.....	81
D. THE MATRIX.....	84
E. PATHWAYS TO MISFORTUNE.....	84
V. CONCLUSIONS.....	89
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST .....	93

## I. INTRODUCTION

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the end of a bi-polar international security system but it also shattered naïve hopes for a more stable and secure global order. The world today is still far from being stable, despite the fact that large-scale military conflicts between well-defined antagonistic blocs are less likely to occur in the foreseeable future. Indeed, new threats and risks have emerged. Complex ethnic, religious, and political rivalries and tensions have unleashed painful wars that have caused thousands of victims and huge material losses in the past decade. Such violent conflicts will probably continue to mark the international environment for a long time.

In view of the significance for European security of the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia in the 1990s and the NATO-led imposition of an interim settlement in Bosnia in 1995, this thesis seeks to advance understanding of these events. The thesis includes an assessment of successes and failures in the interventions in Bosnia by foreign powers during the period 1992-1995. The thesis considers the following five hypotheses:

- An organization's ability to take efficient actions to provide security depends to a great extent upon its ability to accurately assess its power vis à vis the power of the other organizations it is in conflict with.
- Coordination between the political apparatus and the military establishment is essential in generating sound military strategies that reflect the appropriate political security decisions. During this interaction process failure lurks at many levels. It is the analyst's task "to locate and identify those levels, and to explore the links that bind together actions and decisions taken at different times and in different places that, considered individually, do not seem to invite disaster but interreact to generate military misfortune."<sup>1</sup>
- Asymmetries in military strategies or decision-making systems may prove in some circumstances to be more significant than quantitative military asymmetries.
- Explanations of failure or success should focus on an organization's structure and functioning rather than on individuals.
- Analyses should recognize that an organization might function in a particular way at a certain moment in its history that cannot be taken as the organization's characteristic way of action. In other words, the evolution of

---

<sup>1</sup> Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), p. 24.

any organization results from its consecutive functions and structural adaptation to external factors.

The methodology selected for this thesis requires (a) an analytical survey of primary as well as secondary sources related to the 1992-1995 war in Bosnia and (b) analyses of the interacting parties in conflict.

Two chapters are devoted to an analytical survey of Bosnian history from the sixth century to the present. The survey refers to numerous political leaders, military commanders, and diplomats to emphasize historical moments in the Bosnian history, but it does not focus on causal relationships. This survey seeks to avoid three misleading effects that may be generated by "utilitarian history:"

- A distortion of reality by an exclusive focus on the leader's actions and decisions, in the case of "applicatory" history;
- A reckless ransacking of history for evidence to support *a priori* positions, in the case of history in support of a principle; and
- Myth-making and morale-building at the expense of truth, in the case of the "monumental history."<sup>2</sup>

The analysis of the interacting parties in the conflict will apply a five-step method Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch present in their book *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War*.<sup>3</sup> The first step requires the exact identification of what the failure was. To do so one must resort to counterfactual analysis, or more simply, make a judgement as to what would have been required to transform failure into something less harmful, such as a mere setback. The second step requires the exact identification of the critical tasks that were incomplete or unfulfilled and thus determined the eventual failure. The third step requires the conduct of a "layered analysis" that examines behavior at different levels of organization and their relative contributions to the failure. The fourth step demands an "analytical matrix," a simplified chart of contributing failures that presents graphically the key problems leading to ultimate failure. Finally, the last step identifies the larger causes of the ultimate failure in question.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

Chapter II of the thesis provides the minimum of Bosnian historical background required for an understanding of the developments in the 1992-1995 Bosnian war. The "Restless Bosnia" chapter briefly reviews several relevant historic events related to the false national allegiances based on religion of the three Bosnian communities (such as the Orthodox Christian-Roman Catholic rivalry over the centuries), ethnic origins (such as the formation of the Serb and Croat ethnic groups), and part of the Titoist period in Bosnia.

Chapter III analyzes five stages in the actions of the most significant nations and international organizations involved in the 1992-1995 war and post-war arrangements in Bosnia. The five main stages of the war are as follows: (a) Bosnia from Tito's death in 1980 to the 1991 elections; (b) the process of pursuing Bosnia's *de jure* independence (October 1991-April 1992); (c) Western failure (early 1992-early 1994); (d) conflict resolution efforts in Bosnia (early 1994-late 1995); and (e) post-Dayton developments in Bosnia (since December 1995). The survey of these periods focuses on the diplomatic and military actions the Serbs, the Bosnian Serbs, the Bosnian Croats, the Bosnian Muslims, the Croats, the French, the British, the Germans, the Russians, and the Americans performed as national actors or as part of international organizations such as the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Finally, chapter IV conducts an analysis that seeks to encompass the dynamics of the war in Bosnia and to assess the behavior and interactions of all the previously mentioned actors. The analysis includes a comparison of the parties' political goals, military strategies, concepts of operations, decision-making systems, and military organizations.

The thesis as a whole seeks to demonstrate that the quest for security represents a continuous process and not simply the absence of war. Although war sometimes puts the very existence of nations into question, it must be recognized as an inevitable factor in the pursuit of security, pending the construction of an international order that might someday eliminate war. As nations are continuously engaged in defending their security, an accurate assessment of lessons from recent conflicts and potential developments becomes

crucially important, in peacetime as well as in war. The great challenge is to avoid failures to learn from the past or current developments, to anticipate the nature of a potential war, and/or to create a military establishment capable of rapid adaptation to new requirements. Incorrect assessments could result in catastrophic decisions that might lead nations into collapse and subjugation.

## II. RESTLESS BOSNIA

Conflicts of interests among various groups have constantly and sometimes violently shaped the relations among nations and ethnic or religious communities in the Balkans. Many observers argue that these conflicts stem from ancient hatreds. According to Huntington, fault line conflicts<sup>1</sup> between groups from different civilizations within a state can be buried for years or decades; but they always return. They tend to be vicious, bloody, and lengthy, since fundamental issues regarding the identity of the parties involved are at stake. In Huntington's view, "they may be interrupted by truces or agreements but these tend to break down and the conflict is resumed."<sup>2</sup> Therefore an enduring peace seems to be a rather hopeless prospect in the Balkans.

History has an importance that must be carefully and realistically assessed. It is dangerous to underestimate the weight of history but it may be equally unwise to overestimate it. Inherited hatreds in the region have repeatedly resulted in cycles of killing and revenge that have paved the way to future explosions of extreme hate and subsequent violence. The establishment of an enduring peace in the Balkans requires a good understanding of not only the history of this region but also of some other complex factors, sometimes even more dangerous than the region's history, that may generate extreme violence. Are the developments in Bosnia the exclusive result of the objective differences among the three principal communities? Certainly not. These differences do not suffice to explain the latest rampant escalation of hate and violence in Bosnia. Yet history may help analysts comprehend the patterns of political and strategic culture of the Bosnian communities and deepen the understanding required when analyzing complex and dynamic phenomena.

Geography has placed Bosnia in one of the world's most restless places. Nations and ethnic and religious minorities have crossed paths for centuries here. Shifting alliances and a series of dominant powers have shaped the dynamic environment of the region. Above all, the absence of any ethnically homogeneous province here, let alone any racially homogeneous state, can only complicate the already complex phenomena and

---

<sup>1</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), p. 208.



raise questions about the theories of pure ethnic identities that have dominated the national politics of the Balkan lands. Indeed, the study of the early history of Bosnia, a country often called the microcosm of the Balkans, demonstrates that there is no factual basis for conducting modern policies in terms of ancient ethnic origins.

#### A. FIRST SETTLERS

It is impossible to find a definite date for the beginning of Bosnian history. Yet for reasons of language, culture and more than a thousand years of history, it is probably fair to say that the arrival of Slavs in the Balkans in the sixth and seventh centuries is the natural starting-point for any history of Bosnia.

The Illyrians were the earliest inhabitants of much of modern Yugoslavia and Albania. Initially they spoke an Indo-European language related to modern Albanian. This was supplemented by Latin, under the firm Roman rule. On the territory corresponding to the modern Yugoslavia, the South Slavs either drove out or eventually absorbed the existing Illyrian population.<sup>3</sup> In addition to Romans and Slavs, Goths, Asiatic Huns, Iranian Alans, and Avars transited the region, but it was the Slavs who assimilated them all.

“By the 620s a Slav population was well established in the modern Bulgaria and Serbia, and had probably penetrated into Bosnia too. Then within a few years, two new Slav tribes arrived on scene: the Croats and the Serbs.”<sup>4</sup> By the seventh century both tribes had established kingdoms in Central Europe: “White Croatia,” which included part of modern southern Poland, and “White Serbia,” which covered the modern Czech lands. It was from there that they came south, to the western Balkans.<sup>5</sup>

The Serbs settled in the area corresponding to modern southwestern Serbia and later gradually extended their rule into modern Montenegro and Herzegovina. “The Croats settled in areas roughly corresponding to modern Croatia, probably including most

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>3</sup> Richard West, *Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers Inc., 1996), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

of modern Bosnia proper.”<sup>6</sup> The Serbs and the Croats had been, from the earliest times, distinct but closely connected, living and migrating in tandem. By the time they came to the Balkans there was already a large Slav population in place that absorbed both the Serb and Croat populations. According to reputable historians, the major Slav substratum, which must have already absorbed the remnants of the original Illyrians, Celts, Romans, Goths, Alans, Huns, Avars, and individuals from all parts of the Roman Empire, cannot be divided into sub-ethnic groups. To the same end, “in spite of later division, both political and religious, the language spoken by most of the South Slav people has stayed the same to the present day.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore, any attempt to invent ancient ethnic divisions among their descendants is necessarily futile and cannot be based on any reliable historical evidence.

The political history of the western Balkans from the seventh to the eleventh centuries is “patchy and confused, with a succession of conquests and shifting allegiances,”<sup>8</sup> dominated by the neighboring Byzantine Empire and Hungary. Yet Bosnia proper seemed to be more linked to the Croat lands than to Byzantium and aligned towards the Croat-Hungarian cultural and political realm. The same held true of religious organization, in that the bishopric of Bosnia is mentioned as a Roman Catholic see in the eleventh century (after the Great Schism between Rome and Constantinople in 1054).<sup>9</sup>

## **B. TRADITIONAL REGIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE IDENTITY OF BOSNIA**

The history of Bosnia from 1180 to 1992 is exceptionally complex. Bosnia has frequently been subject to external ambitions, resulting in annexation or partition. Ottomans, Hungarians, Austro-Hungarians, Serbs, and Croats have relentlessly tried to dominate this land or at least grab parts of it. Despite all these attempts, Bosnia has enjoyed unity, if not independence or autonomy, for most of its existence.

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Richard West, *op. cit.*, p. 4

<sup>8</sup> Noel Malcolm, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

Three powerful rulers stand out between 1180 and the Ottoman conquest in 1463: Ban Kulic (1180-1204), Ban Stephen Kotromanich (1322-1353), and King Stephen Tvrtko (1353-1391). Two of them expanded Bosnia and made it a powerful state. Under Ban Kotromanich Bosnia expanded to include the principality of Hum (Herzegovina). Under King Tvrtko Bosnia expanded further to the south and acquired a large part of the Dalmatian coast. During the second half of Tvrtko's reign it managed to become the most powerful state within the western Balkans.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, King Tvrtko was even-handed in dealing with all religious groups under his rule; and "Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the fourteenth century, was an example to Europe of how people of different religions could live together in harmony."<sup>11</sup> These three reigns were the highest points of power and independence Bosnia enjoyed in the medieval period.

Throughout this period Hungary was the dominant neighboring country. The Hungarians planned to gain control over the bishopric of Bosnia and got involved in a succession dispute by supporting King Ostojica's ascension to the Bosnian throne in 1404. Yet in 1414, by supporting Tvrtko II as rightful King of Bosnia, the Ottoman Empire disrupted the balance of power, both militarily and politically. The Ottoman Turks made clear that from now on they would have an interest and influence in Bosnia rivaling that of Hungary. Indeed, a large Turkish army under Mehmet II would conquer Bosnia in 1463.

Bosnia enjoyed integrity from the very beginning of Ottoman rule. Until 1580 it was a distinct military district incorporated into the *eyalet* (or province, the largest constituent unit of the Empire) of Rumelia. But in that year the decision was made to create a new *eyalet*: the *eyalet* of Bosnia. "There was now a Bosnian entity which included the whole of modern Bosnia and Herzegovina, plus some neighboring parts of Slavonia, Croatia, Dalmatia and Serbia. While the old kingdom of Serbia, for example, was to remain divided into a number of smaller units, each of which was just one of the

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Richard West, op. cit., p. 9.

many components of the *eyalet* of Buda or Rumelia, Bosnia was to enjoy this special status as a distinct entity for the rest of the Ottoman period.”<sup>12</sup>

For the next almost four and a half centuries Bosnia was part of the Ottoman Empire despite the continuous attempts to gain control over the region by Hungary (later Austria-Hungary) and Russia. King Matthias of Hungary made the first of a long chain of such attempts. He established a new Hungarian-ruled “banate” of Bosnia and in 1471 promoted the Ban to the title of “King of Bosnia.”<sup>13</sup> The Ottoman Turks regained total control in 1528, one year after they had smashed the Hungarian army at Mohacs. In 1689 the Habsburg army marched again across Bosnia and into Serbia, but the Turks drove it back the next year.

In 1697, after having inflicted a huge defeat on the Turks at the battle of Zenta, Prince Eugene led a small army of 6,000 men into the heart of Bosnia. The Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 nonetheless restored Turkish authority over Bosnia; but, by ceding Hungary and Transylvania to the Habsburgs, it confirmed the Ottomans’ gradual retreat in Europe. Consequently, after the huge defeat inflicted by the same Prince Eugene on the Turks at Petrovaradin in 1716, in the Treaty of Passarowitz in 1718 Austria received a first strip of Bosnian territory. Encouraged by this acquisition, the Austrians violated the Treaty of Passarowitz in 1736 and invaded Bosnia. The next year, the Bosnian governor Hekim-oglu Ali-pasa defeated the Austrian army at Banja Luka. The defeat resulted in the 1739 Treaty of Belgrade, whereby the Austrians renounced all the territory they had gained at Passarowitz in 1718.

The next major war — in 1788 — was the result of a plan by Joseph II of Austria and Catherine the Great of Russia to take over the Ottoman lands in the Balkans. Austrian forces entered Bosnia but withdrew in 1791, when Austria agreed to give up all the gains it had made in Serbia and Bosnia as a result of the diplomatic and political pressure of the other European powers.

Austria-Hungary eventually succeeded in taking over Bosnia. Amazingly, it did so without any effort. It came as a gift the Congress of Berlin presented to Austria-Hungary

---

<sup>12</sup> Noel Malcolm, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

in July 1878. Bosnia and Herzegovina, while still in theory under Ottoman suzerainty, was completely occupied by Austria-Hungary on 20 October 1878.

The Austro-Hungarians had long been aware of the problems posed by gaining authority over many Slavs in the Empire. In taking over Bosnia they faced an even greater challenge: to keep the Slavs divided in the Balkans. Therefore they had to avoid having Croatia expand into a South Slav state as well as to prevent Serbia from initially absorbing Bosnia and then undermining Austro-Hungarian rule in Croatia. Consequently, "the problem of whether to assign Bosnia to Austria or Hungary was solved by making it a Crown land, which meant it was ruled by neither and at the same time by both."<sup>14</sup>

Benjamin Kallay, the highest Austro-Hungarian representative in charge of Bosnia between 1882 and 1903, went even farther. He aimed his entire policy at "insulating Bosnia from the nationalist political movements in Serbia and Croatia, and developing the idea of Bosnian nationhood as a separate and unifying factor."<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, by 1908 his failure was obvious. Reflecting the increasing cooperation between Serbs and Croats in the project of establishing a common South Slav state, Serb students in Bosnia abandoned their narrow Serb nationalism for a broader pro-Yugoslav campaign. Eventually, partly as a result of the misery of the First World War that had softened the divisions between them and other religious communities, the Muslims of Bosnia were also willing to take the plunge into a separate Yugoslav state.<sup>16</sup>

The first configuration of the new independent kingdom emerged in November 1920 with Yugoslav-wide elections for a constituent assembly. The future structure of the Yugoslav state preserved the regional-administrative identity of Bosnia. The constitution adopted on 28 June 1921 organized the "The Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes" territory into thirty-three "oblasts" that made Croatia's outline disappear from the map while preserving the outline of Bosnia. "Indeed, the six Bosnian oblasts corresponded precisely to the six 'Kreise' of the Austria-Hungarians, which had been based on the *sandzaks* (military districts within an *eyalet*) of the final period of the

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 161.

Ottoman rule.”<sup>17</sup> Bosnia had managed to be the only constituent element of Yugoslavia that would retain its identity.

Political developments within Yugoslavia soon interrupted this long tradition of being a distinct entity. In January 1929 King Alexander suspended the constitution of 1921 and made an initially symbolic change: the state would now be called “Yugoslavia.” Furthermore, attempting to erase the old regional identities from the map, King Alexander imposed a completely new division of the Yugoslav territory into nine “banovine.” According to the new division Bosnia was now divided among four of them: “Vrbaska, which included some Croatian territory, Drinska, which included a large part of Serbia, Zetska, which consisted mainly of Montenegro, and Primorska, which extended to the Dalmatian coast.”<sup>18</sup> For the first time since 1180 Bosnia had been partitioned.

The Second World War preserved the partition of Bosnia. Formally incorporated into the new “Independent State of Croatia,” Bosnia was *de facto* separated by the German-Italian military occupation dividing-line running from northwest to southeast. Initially, the prospects for Bosnian unity in a future Communist Yugoslav state were no better. The plan based on a Soviet model consisted of five “national republics” for the five “nations” of Yugoslavia (Serb, Croat, Slovene, Macedonian and Montenegrin) and an autonomous province of Bosnia. It was only through the lively opposition of the Bosnian delegates at the “Anti-Fascist Council” in 1943 that Bosnia prevented the plan from being adopted. At the Council, Bosnia not only successfully avoided being absorbed into Serbia but also achieved the final compromise that gave it republican status yet described it as a republic inhabited “by parts of the Serb and Croat nations, as well as by the Bosnian Muslims.”<sup>19</sup>

Consequently, after the Second World War, Bosnia recovered its integrity as one of the Titoist Yugoslav republics. Yet Bosnia would be “regarded as somehow lower in status than the other republics of Yugoslavia.”<sup>20</sup> This inferior treatment had come about,

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

the Yugoslavs felt, "because Bosnia was seen as containing not a distinctive nation but merely fragments of two nations (Serbs and Croats) and a non-nation."<sup>21</sup>

### C. A BOSNIAN NATION?

The question of what it meant to be a Muslim in Bosnia — of whether it was a religious, an ethnic or a national identity — did not solve itself gradually, despite the belief of the Yugoslav Communist Party in the early 1940s that Muslims would eventually come to identify with Croats or Serbs. Indeed, the first Party Congress after the end of the Second World War had to admit that "Bosnia cannot be divided between Serbia and Croatia, not only because Serbs and Croats live mixed together on the whole territory, but also because the territory is inhabited by Muslims who have not yet decided on their national identity."<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, the 1948 census offered Bosnian citizens three options: Muslim Serb, Muslim Croat or "Muslim, nationally undeclared" (or "undetermined").<sup>23</sup> The results were far from meeting the Yugoslav Communists' expectations: 72,000 declared themselves Serbs and 25,000 Croats, but 778,000 registered as "undeclared." The Communists were nonetheless strongly promoting a spirit of "Yugoslavism," and therefore they organized a new census in 1953 that replaced the category "Muslim" with "Yugoslav, nationally undeclared." Once again, the results did not meet their expectations since 891,800 Muslims registered now as "Yugoslavs, nationally undeclared."<sup>24</sup>

The conjunction of "the decision to drop the policy of 'integral Yugoslavism' and strengthen republican identities instead in the early 1960s, and the belated rise of a small elite of Muslim Communist officials within the Party machine in Bosnia"<sup>25</sup> produced a shift towards recognizing the Bosnian Muslims as a nation. The first sign of change came in the 1961 census that allowed people to declare themselves "Muslim in the ethnic sense." Mirroring this wind of change, the Bosnian constitution referred equally in its

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

preamble to "Serbs, Croats and Muslims allied in the past by a common life," thus implying without specifically stating that Serbs, Croats and Muslims were equally to be regarded as nations.<sup>26</sup>

Later, the League of Communists in 1965 listed people as either "Serb," "Croat" or "Muslim," but success ultimately came at the meeting of the Bosnian Central Committee in May 1968. The communiqué issued then stated: "Practice has shown the harm of different forms of pressure . . . from the earlier period when Muslims were designated as Serbs or Croats from the national viewpoint. It has been shown, and present socialist practice confirms, that the Muslims are a distinct nation."<sup>27</sup> Consequently, the 1971 census allowed people to register as "Muslim, in the sense of a nation."

This was the only natural development. Indeed, the ethnic substratum Bosnian Muslims identify with is "Slav" or "Bosnian" or "Serbo-Croat;" but to call it either Serb or Croat would be inappropriate for two reasons.

First, no distinct "Serb" or "Croat" entities existed in Bosnia before the Islamicization that began after the Ottoman conquest in 1463. As already noted, the Serb and Croat tribes that settled on the territory corresponding to Bosnia had been assimilated by the larger Slav population in the region. So it would be a falsification of history to talk about "Muslim Serbs" or "Muslim Croats," because this would imply that their ancestors had been either Serbs or Croats before they became Muslims.

Second, when Bosnian Christians began, at a very late stage, to identify themselves as Serbs or Croats, they did so purely on religious grounds. Indeed, "few individuals can have been certain of their precise ethnic genealogy. For centuries the language, history and geographical location of these two sorts of Bosnian Christians had been the same – which means that in most important respects the substratum which lay beneath their own religious identities was one and the same."<sup>28</sup> An artificial movement based on religious allegiance commenced in the late nineteenth century, when both Orthodox and Catholic Bosnians began to claim, with no factual basis, the ethnic labels of Serbs and Croats.

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 199.



Truly, historical enmities had separated Croats and Serbs as collectivities at various times in their histories but, strictly speaking, the real differences emerging in the late nineteenth century were cultural rather than ethnic. "When all was said and done, the only truly irreducible definition of what identified individual Croats, Serbs, and Muslims ethnically, and equally important, distinguished them from each other, was religion . . ." <sup>29</sup> Indeed, "what made someone a Croat was the fact that he or she was a Roman Catholic, just as what made someone a Serb was membership, however attenuated, in the Orthodox church." <sup>30</sup>

According to Noel Malcolm, "Only in the mid-nineteenth century at the earliest did the modern idea of nationhood begin to spread from Croatia and Serbia to the Catholics and Orthodox of Bosnia." <sup>31</sup> Teofil Petranovic, a teacher at the Orthodox School in Sarajevo, gave one of the first signs. In the 1860s, he formed a group of people to go out into the villages and tell the Orthodox peasants that they had to stop calling themselves "*hriscani*" (the local term for "Orthodox") and start calling themselves "Serbs." <sup>32</sup> A later example is offered by Mehmet-beg, a prominent mayor of Sarajevo. In 1891 he founded a journal entitled *The Bosnian* "which attacked conservative attitudes of the Muslim clergy and tried to fend off the attempts of both Croat and Serb nationalists to argue that Muslims of Bosnia were 'really' Croats or Serbs." <sup>33</sup> But the formation of the false Serb and Croat national identities continued. Political tensions between Zagreb and Belgrade in the 1920s also encouraged prominent Muslims to publicly identify themselves as "Muslim Croats" or "Muslim Serbs." <sup>34</sup>

Essentially, to call someone in Bosnia a Serb, a Croat, or a Muslim today means to use a concept that was constructed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries out of a combination of religion, language, history and the person's own sense of identification. Serbs, Croats and Muslims in Bosnia are all Bosnians; but, unlike the

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>29</sup> David Rieff, *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), p. 68.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>31</sup> Noel Malcolm, op. cit., p. 149.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 126.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 165.

“defective” Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats, the Muslims have no sponsor-nation. Their faith has crucially been related to the existence of a Bosnian entity.

Under such circumstances, each of the three communities has naturally pursued what it perceived as its own “national interests.”

#### **D. SHIFTING ALLIANCES AND FRATRICIDE FIGHTS**

Bosnian history shows many examples of all possible combinations among Bosnians (Muslim-Orthodox, Muslim-Catholic, Orthodox-Catholic) to temporarily form alliances, provide mutual support against a third party commonly perceived as hostile or even to wage fratricidal wars within the same community.

The long chain of violent fratricidal confrontations began with the Vlachs. Their origins can hardly be determined, but a combination of historical linguistics, the study of place-names and the history of the Roman Empire suggest that the heartland of the Vlachs was in an area stretching from northern Albania through Kosovo and north-central Serbia. They were a very mobile people with strong military traditions. Taking into account such qualities, both the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburgs saw in the Vlachs the perfect tool to defend their borders with minimal costs. Consequently, by the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries both empires favored the Vlachs' settlement in the vicinity of their common military border. “Apart from the big set-piece campaigns, the military struggle between Ottoman and Habsburg on this border consisted mainly, year in, year out, of Vlachs fighting Vlachs.”<sup>35</sup>

Conversely, the continuous confrontation between the Ottomans and the Habsburgs often brought to fore the interests of the Muslims and the Orthodox. In 1690, many of the Orthodox welcomed the return of the Turks, after they had experienced for one year the zeal of Austrian Catholic priests. In 1788, the same Muslim-Orthodox “team” manifested stiff resistance against the Austrians in the frontier region at the fortress of Dubica.<sup>36</sup> In 1878, local Muslim opposition to the Austrian occupation of Bosnia led by Hadzi Lojo enjoyed the support of the leading Orthodox priests, “who were

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

happy to think that Bosnia had thrown off Ottoman rule and had no wish to see it replaced by the rule of Austria.”<sup>37</sup>

There were also confrontations between Christians and Muslims that had hardened during the first half of the nineteenth century. In 1853, there were incidents caused by the Muslim refusal to permit the construction of an Orthodox church inside Travnik and a Catholic church inside Sarajevo. Yet “it was the period 1871-2, according to [Josef] Koetschet, that ‘we first began to see a picture of religious hatred,’”<sup>38</sup> when the Bosnian Christians’ interests were being promoted by “protector” powers — Russia for the Orthodox and Austria-Hungary for the Catholics. One notorious cause was the dispute between the Orthodox community and the Muslim clergy, with the latter insisting that the new Orthodox “cathedral’s belfry should not exceed the height of the Begova mosque’s minaret.”<sup>39</sup>

The Christian-Muslim dispute was seriously aggravated during the last three years of Turkish rule in Bosnia as a result of the persecutions Orthodox Serbs were subjected to. Consequently, at the end of the Russian-Ottoman war in 1877 “Bosnian Muslims and Christians so detested one another that Bosnia left to its own devices would have been a hotbed for a long time to come.”<sup>40</sup> Yet the beginning of the First World War found once again Serbs fighting Serbs.

Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated on 28 June 1914 in Sarajevo. The choleric archduke had been the most influential advocate of a Triune Monarchy that envisioned an equal status for Austrians, Magyars, and Slavs.<sup>41</sup> His death split the Bosnian Serb community. There were the loyalists — that is, the Habsburg supporters — on the one hand and the sympathizers with the Serbian cause on the other. Some leading Bosnian Serbs petitioned the Austro-Hungarian authorities to let them go straight to the front line against Serbia. Many of the Austro-Hungarian troops from Bosnia sent into Serbia under the command of the Bosnian governor, General Potiorek, were Serbs. On the opposite side, many Bosnian Serbs volunteered to join the Serbian army; around

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

5,000 Bosnian Serbs were known to have joined the "First Serbian Volunteer Division." The Orthodox were fighting the Orthodox again. It was in a sense a return to the old days of Habsburg-Ottoman border warfare in the late fifteenth century.

The beginning of the twentieth century brought a new shift in alliances. Until the end of the first decade of the twentieth century the Muslims had usually tended to side with the Serbs as natural allies against Austria, but now they tended to side with the Croats as natural allies against the excessive centralism promoted by the Serbs. This shift was first demonstrated in 1911 in the agreement uniting the 29 Muslim and 23 Catholic MPs against the 37 Orthodox MPs in the Bosnian Parliament in order to reduce support for agrarian reforms.<sup>42</sup> In the 1920s the Muslims and the Slovenes operated as a "third force to mediate between the anti-centralist Croats and the centralist Serbs."<sup>43</sup>

The Second World War once again brought pain and fratricidal fights among and within communities as several wars took place simultaneously on Yugoslav territory. First, there was the war of the Axis against the Allies that squeezed Yugoslavia for raw materials and labor. Second, there was the war of the Axis against Yugoslav resistance movements. There were, moreover, two civil wars. "One was a war conducted by Croatian extremists against the Serb population of Croatia and Bosnia, a war of aggression on one side and sometimes indiscriminate retaliation on the other. And finally there was a war between the two main resistance organizations in which the Serbs from those areas enlisted: the Cetniks and the Communist Partisans."<sup>44</sup>

The Croat Ustasa was the organization of the Croat leader Ante Pavelic, the "*Poglavic*" (*Führer*) of the Independent State of Croatia, which incorporated Bosnia. Cetniks represented the Serb villagers' response to the extremely vicious aggression of the Croat Ustasa that even the Germans had found too brutal.<sup>45</sup> They were organized by Draza Mihailovic, a former Yugoslav Army colonel representing the King, an Anglophile and an expert on guerrilla affairs. The Communist Partisans were formed not only by Serbs but also by Croats and Muslims. Their leader was Tito, at that time a Stalin loyalist,

---

<sup>41</sup> Richard West, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>42</sup> Noel Malcolm, op. cit., p. 152.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 168.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

who "was planning a resistance operation which will not only try to drive out the Germans, but also engage in a social revolution, seizing power for a post-war Communist state."<sup>46</sup>

The Bosnian Croats and the Bosnian Serbs held positions that can easily be understood. A minority of Bosnian Croats became "active Ustasa supporters, while the majority welcomed the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia to begin with and became more and more disenchanted thereafter, until in 1943 and 1944 large numbers of them were joining the Partisans."<sup>47</sup> The Bosnian Serbs became from the beginning active supporters of Cetniks or Partisans that fought against each other as well as against Ustasa and the Axis military occupation.

The Bosnian Muslims were probably the most divided group during the Second World War. Because of their inter-war preference for Zagreb, the initial tendency was to become active supporters of Ustasa. But disillusionment set in quickly among the Muslims: the rule of law simply did not operate in the Ustasa Independent State of Croatia. Consequently, the Bosnian Muslims issued "the Mostar resolution that referred to 'innumerable crimes, abuses, illegalities and forced conversions'"<sup>48</sup> committed against the Orthodox Serbs by the Catholic Croats in the Ustasa. Although this resolution might suggest a new shift in the Muslims' sympathy from the Croats to the Serbs, this was not the case, since with few exceptions, relations between Muslims and Cetniks (composed of Orthodox Serbs) generally proved tense. Additionally, Muslims were not represented in the royal government-in-exile. In fact, being so divided among them and disappointed by previous alliances, the Bosnian Muslims tried to form their own local defense units to protect themselves against everyone else. By October 1942 there was a "Muslim Volunteer Legion" that fought more against the Communist Partisans than against the Cetniks and that distrusted the Ustasa. In April 1943 the Bosnian Muslims also formed the SS *Handzar* Division, which to their disappointment was sent to Germany instead of being used to protect Muslim towns and villages. Partly as a result of their

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

disappointment many Muslims, including 2,000 members of the SS *Handzar* division, joined the Partisans and formed Tito's "Sixteenth Muslim Brigade" in September 1943.

The end of the war found the Muslims "reconciled to the prospect of Communist rule: instead of absorption in Croatia (the Ustasa solution) or absorption in Serbia (the Cetnik plan), they were offered a vaguely federal solution in which Bosnia would continue to exist."<sup>49</sup> They had fought on all sides and had suffered losses from all sides.

Unfortunately, the Bosnian victims of the Second World War were not to be the last ones. They were added to a long list of refugees, people driven from their homes, and victims of atrocities and extreme violence in Bosnian history.

## **E. VIOLENCE IN BOSNIAN HISTORY**

The numerous wars and long rivalries among Ottomans, Austrians (or Austro-Hungarians), Croats, and Serbs — and among Yugoslavs themselves — and the tragic consequences of the two world wars have generated a large number of refugees and victims that has had a great impact on the size and nature of the Bosnian population. There have been many such examples in Bosnian history. Perhaps these examples have been too numerous to leave much hope for any healing in the foreseeable future.

One such episode occurred during the Austrian-Ottoman war of 1683-1699. The first refugees fled to Bosnia in 1684-1687. They were 130,000 Muslim converts and Ottoman spahis retreating southwards from their abandoned households as the Austrians gradually conquered Ottoman-ruled Hungary. Some of them, who had lost everything, "were embittered men who probably brought with them a new sense of hostility to Christianity."<sup>50</sup> But soon Christians were to flee also.

In 1690 Turks drove back the Austrians after their march across Bosnia in the previous year. Led by their Patriarch, at least 30,000 Orthodox Serbs fled northwards with the retreating Austrian army. Catholics soon shared the same fate.

---

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

Catholics joined a retreating Austrian army seven years later. Thousands of Catholic merchants accompanied Prince Eugene on his return northwards after he successfully raided Sarajevo on 22 October 1697.

According to Noel Malcolm, if not already by the second half of the seventeenth century, the Orthodox population of Bosnia definitely outnumbered the Catholics by the end of the 1683-1699 war.<sup>51</sup> As for the Muslims and Christians in Bosnia, they had no major conflicts in the next century. It was Serb anti-Ottoman feeling that triggered the violence again at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

In 1804 a serious revolt broke out in Serbia, and there was an uprising of people belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church in Bosnia. "The general anti-Ottoman violence in Serbia included widespread massacres, robberies and forced baptisms of ordinary Slav Muslims as well as Turks; survivors began to flee to Bosnia."<sup>52</sup> The Sultan agreed to grant Serbia a large measure of autonomy in 1815, after the Serbs had heavily defeated one Ottoman army in 1805 and another one, sent from Bosnia, in 1806. But the violence was far from its end in the nineteenth century.

After an insurrection against Turkish rule had begun in Bosnia in August 1875, the Ottoman governor acted with ineffective brutality. "During 1876, hundreds of villages were burnt down and at least 5,000 peasants killed; by the end of the year, the number of refugees from Bosnia was probably 100,000 at least, and possibly 250,000."<sup>53</sup> The war on the Ottoman Empire declared by Serbia and Montenegro in July of the same year could only harden the already hostile attitude of the Bosnian authorities toward the Orthodox population. In this respect, refugees' reports in early 1877 seemed to indicate for the first time the existence of what later would be called religious or ethnic cleansing; such reports mentioned "a complete clearing out of the Serb people of Bosnia, for the Turkish authorities themselves hunt them down."<sup>54</sup> These developments complicated the problems of the new Austrian administration after 1878.

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

At the outset the new authorities had to face "the need to return more than 200,000 refugees to their homes,"<sup>55</sup> probably mostly Christians. But they also had to deal with Muslims fleeing to Turkey — "some who were unwilling on religious grounds to live under infidel rule, and others, no doubt, who feared justice or reprisals for the terrible things they had done against Christians during the last three years of Ottoman rule."<sup>56</sup> Official figures issued by the Austro-Hungarian government stated that between 1883 and 1918 56,625 Muslim inhabitants of Bosnia left and 4,042 returned. The Austro-Hungarian official figures have been supported by Serb historians but contested by Muslim scholars that have claimed a total emigration of 300,000.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps a number around 100,000 looks more likely for net emigration, but it is only a guess. However, even the highest estimates pale if compared to the verified figures of the twentieth century.

Bosnia experienced ethnic cleansing and religious reprisals during the First World War. For fear of fifth columnists, Governor Potiorek and his successor, Baron Sarkotic, supervised the resettlement of the Serbs from the eastern border region of Bosnia to the west of the province and the removal of roughly 5,000 Serb families that were driven across the border into Serbia and Montenegro. Moreover, between 700 and 2,200 out of a total of 3,300 and possibly as many as 5,500 Bosnian insurrection suspects, mainly Serbs, are thought to have died in internment camps in Bosnia and Hungary.<sup>58</sup>

Despite having lived in peace with their Muslim neighbors for forty years or more, in their triumphalism against Muslims at the end of the First World War, Bosnian Serb villagers committed atrocities. By March 1919, around 1,000 Muslim men and 76 women had been killed and 270 villages had been pillaged, "with the assistance, passive or active, of the Serbian troops."<sup>59</sup>

Luckily, the devastation was much less than desired by extremist nationalists such as Stojan Protic, a minister in the Serbian government, "who had recommended in 1917 'solving' the problem of the Bosnian Muslims through a program of forced conversion

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 162.



and massacres.”<sup>60</sup> However, after its first employment in 1877, the idea that became known in the 1990s as “ethnic cleansing” seemed to be already deeply rooted in nationalists; and it has played a terrible role in Bosnia ever since.

For example, the Croat Ustasa ideologists’ main concern was to “solve” the problem of the large Serb minority (1.9 million out of a total of 6.3 million) in the territory of the Independent State of Croatia. Far from being ruled by a docile puppet regime subservient to its Axis allies, the Independent State of Croatia was “incomparably more determined, more ambitious and more independent than Mussolini’s Italy, and more violent than Hitler’s Reich.”<sup>61</sup> Its policy — to “convert a third, expel a third and kill a third” — toward the approximately two million Serbs “was conceived without the support of the Axis powers, and was executed with a ferocity that horrified the Italian army, and shocked even the German SS.”<sup>62</sup> Consequently, on 26 June 1941, *Hrvatski List*, the official newspaper of the Independent State of Croatia published this policy<sup>63</sup> while the Catholic Church made itself ready to take in some 600,000 converts.<sup>64</sup> But “the Ustasa had already converted, expelled or murdered hundreds of thousands of Serbs by 26 June 1941.”<sup>65</sup> As late as May 1941 the Ustasa conducted a mass arrest and shot hundreds of Serbs in Mostar. Similar atrocities were committed in other Bosnian towns such as Bihac, Brcko, and Doboj; and entire Serb villages in the Sarajevo region were destroyed.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, also in May 1941, Minister of the Interior Andrija Artukovic “ordered the massacre of 4,000 Serbs in his native district.”<sup>67</sup> All these officials probably followed Viktor Gutic’s creed. Gutic, the Prefect of Western Bosnia, “was one of the first on record to use the term ‘cleansing’”<sup>68</sup> (“ciscenje” in Serbo-Croat). The Serb villagers

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>61</sup> Richard West, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>66</sup> Noel Malcolm, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>67</sup> Richard West, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

killed more than one thousand Muslims in Bileca and around Visegrad in the next three months.<sup>69</sup>

In early 1942, extremist nationalists among Serb Cetniks such as Stevan Moljevik envisioned the establishment of a "homogenous Serbia" whose expansion to Dalmatia was to follow the "cleansing (*ciscenje*) of that land of all non-Serb elements. The thing to do would be to send the offenders on their way: Croats to Croatia, and Muslims to Turkey or Albania."<sup>70</sup> Cetniks were thus offered the theoretical basis for their virulent anti-Muslim policy. Along with other local Serb forces they killed many thousands of Muslims in the winters of 1941-1942 and 1942-1943, and the summer of 1942. In the Foca-Cajnice region alone at least 2,000 Muslims were killed in August 1942 and more than 9,000 Muslims, including 8,000 elderly people, women and children, were massacred in February 1943.<sup>71</sup>

In their turn, the Muslims responded by killing Serbs. After its return to Bosnia for "pacification" operations in March 1944, the SS *Handzar* Division committed "indiscriminate reprisals — murders and other crimes — against the local Serb population."<sup>72</sup> It is likely that there were several thousands of Serb victims.

The struggle among the Ustasa, the Cetniks, and the Partisans generated a high number of victims. It is impossible to disentangle this terrible knot and determine the number of victims from each ethnic community generated by the four years of war. "But it is clear that at least one million people died, and it is probable that the majority of them were Yugoslavs killed by Yugoslavs."<sup>73</sup> Probably the atrocities would have continued if the end of the Second World War had not put death-revenge cycles on hold for about forty-five years in a communist Yugoslavia that would admit no "nationality problem."

Tito pacified all parties in his own way. He ordered the indiscriminate killing of more than 18,000 Bosnian Croats, Serbs and Muslims after the British had sent them back to Yugoslavia from Allied-controlled Austria. "Altogether it has been estimated that up to 250,000 people were killed by Tito's mass shooting, forced death marches and

---

<sup>69</sup> Noel Malcolm, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

concentration camps in the period 1945-1946.”<sup>74</sup> Power was much more important to him than reconciliation. The indiscriminate killing of thousands of people signaled the beginning of the new Communist experiment. Tito intended to define a unique Yugoslav people by replacing ethnic identity with class identity. The experiment would fail painfully soon after the death of its initiator.

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

### III. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

#### A. BOSNIA FROM TITO'S DEATH TO THE 1991 ELECTIONS

After Tito died in 1980, events in Yugoslavia fulfilled the prophecy his enemies had made nine years earlier: "When Tito goes the whole thing will collapse."<sup>1</sup> Tito's grand scheme had involved a threefold strategy: self-management of the economy, brotherhood and unity of various nationalities, and non-alignment in foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> His strategy might have been successful had not two major processes, one internal and one external, intervened.

The former concerns the failure of the Yugoslav economy throughout the 1980s. "The whole Titoist economic system — which has been aptly described as 'Self-Mismanagement'"<sup>3</sup> — had only been able to function on borrowed money. Based on loans, giant factories had been built throughout the entire country. This system had worked for years, but the interest payments gradually suffocated it. The economic breakdown became general in the 1980s. However, such giant factories could hardly be efficient and therefore they "would have anyway run at a loss even without the interest payments on the loans which had financed their creation."<sup>4</sup>

Thousands of workers demonstrated against the austerity measures the Yugoslav central authorities, such as the Mikulik government, attempted to undertake in July 1988.<sup>5</sup> According to Noel Malcolm, "the long-term legacy of Tito's economic policies had been to create an increasingly discontented and impoverished population — the perfect place for demagogues to get to work, stirring up the politics of resentment."<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Milosevic, Tudjman and Izetbegovic did their best to harness this genuine discontent and exploit it for their own purposes. Their opportunism thus crucially

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard West, *Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc., 1994), p. 318.

<sup>2</sup> Jolene Kay Jesse, *Pew Case Studies in International Affairs. Case 471: "Humanitarian Aid in the Midst of Conflict: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the Former Yugoslavia"* (Washington D.C.: Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, 1996), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), p. 210.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.

contributed to the failure of Tito's policies and to the subsequent violent collapse of Yugoslavia.

The latter process intervened as a result of the major changes generated by the end of the Cold War. During the Cold War years, Western interests in Yugoslavia had been clearly defined. Yugoslavia was seen as a *de facto* ally against Soviet expansion in the Balkans, and it was thus important that its integrity be preserved. Even Germany, which by 1991 strongly supported Yugoslavia's disintegration by recognizing the independence of Croatia and Slovenia, had shared this opinion. "Chancellor Helmut Kohl expressed this policy during a visit to Yugoslavia in the summer of 1985, when he proclaimed Germany's 'great interest in maintaining the internal and external stability of Yugoslavia.'"<sup>7</sup> But in early 1989 the German view changed because Yugoslavia no longer enjoyed the same geopolitical importance it had had from a Western prospective during the Cold War.

As for the Americans, a number of their foremost experts on the Balkans, such as Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, shared the view "that the traditional American approach to Yugoslavia no longer made sense."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, "the preservation of the country's unity and territorial integrity, which had been a matter of high priority within the Cold War context, was now subordinate to democratization."<sup>9</sup> However, the violent disintegration of the country demonstrated that "unity and democracy were the Siamese twins of Yugoslavia's fate. The loss of one meant the other would die."<sup>10</sup>

The League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) had split, owing to quarrels at its January 1990 congress. The communist party created by Tito had breathed its last. The LCY never met again and consequently, Yugoslavia soon plunged into free democratic elections. Unfortunately, "democratization, the standard medicine believed capable of

---

<sup>7</sup> Saadia Touval, "Lessons of Preventive Diplomacy in Yugoslavia," in Chester A. Crocker and Fen Osler Hampson with Pamela Aall, eds., *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), p. 404.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 404.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 404.

<sup>10</sup> Warren Zimmermann, "The Last Ambassador: A Memoir of the Collapse of Yugoslavia," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74 No. 2 (March/April 1995), p. 6.

curing most of the world's ills,"<sup>11</sup> did not work this time. In a genuine test of ethnic loyalty, ethnic parties won power in all the republics except Macedonia.

Bosnia voted in November 1990, but the vote painfully disappointed all those who still desired a peaceful solution to the crises. "Loyalty towards nation proved stronger than all other loyalties."<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the 99 Muslims, 85 Serbs, 49 Croats and 7 "Yugoslavs" holding the 240 seats in the Bosnian assembly<sup>13</sup> roughly matched the proportions of the Bosnian population as a whole (44 per cent Muslim, 31 per cent Serb and 17 per cent Croat). Consequently, Alija Izetbegovic, the Muslim leader, won the most votes and became president.

As Noel Malcolm observed, "A coalition government was formed, but it was soon obvious that the three national parties not only had mutually exclusive programs, but that they actually represented incompatible national ideologies."<sup>14</sup> Indeed, as Alexa Djilas pointed out, while "Muslims imagined Bosnia as an independent state in which they should predominate . . . the Serbs, for their part, wanted Bosnia to stay inside Yugoslavia and increasingly demanded a Yugoslavia dominated by Serbs."<sup>15</sup> Both programs stood in contrast with the Croatian maximal fantasy, which was to incorporate the whole of Bosnia into Croatia. The more realistic Croats planned to take only those territories of Bosnia with a Croat majority and integrate them into Croatia. The day the irreconcilable differences among the three groups would drag Bosnia into a civil war had become just a matter of time. As Warren Zimmermann put it, not only was Yugoslavia "breaking up into different power centers, but each local region was developing a nationalist ideology, each different from the other. The age of naked nationalism had begun."<sup>16</sup>

## **B. BOSNIAN INDEPENDENCE PROCESS**

Placed between the hammer and the anvil of Serbian and Croatian nationalism, the Bosnian Muslims (sometime called "Bosniaks") strengthened their own nationalism

---

<sup>11</sup> Saadia Touval, op. cit., p. 404.

<sup>12</sup> Aleksa Djilas, "The Nation That Wasn't," *The New Republic* (September 21, 1992), p. 30.

<sup>13</sup> Noel Malcolm, op. cit., p. 222.

<sup>14</sup> Aleksa Djilas, op. cit., p. 31.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

and stood for the preservation of Bosnia as a distinctive and independent entity. The establishment of Bosnian independence was a long and extremely violent process, which encompassed several years between its initial *de jure* and later still questionable *de facto* stages.

To explain this process, this chapter provides a two-fold survey of the main events in the Bosnian crisis. The first part covers the military actions of the primary warring parties and the second focuses on the interventions conducted by external powers and the political actions undertaken by these powers.

The analysis considers the four stages of the Bosnian independence process. The first stage covers the developments in 1991 and early 1992, when the Bosnian crisis was still limited to Yugoslav territory. The second stage focuses on the period from mid-1992 to early 1994, which was characterized by Serbian military successes and Western failures in imposing peace in Bosnia. The third stage covers the period from mid-1994 to late 1995 and encompasses the shift in the fates of the warring parties. Finally, the analysis considers the post-Dayton peace agreement developments.

## **1. The Process of Bosnian *de jure* Independence (1991-April 1992)**

### ***a. Bosnian Political-Military Developments***

In September 1991 the fighting between Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia spilled over into Bosnia. The "Serb Autonomous Regions," large parts of the Bosnian territory in which Bosnian Serbs demanded secession from Bosnia, asked the Yugoslav federal army to intervene to "protect" them. Well-armed federal troops were immediately deployed. Under the new circumstances, the Bosnian assembly began to seriously debate the idea of declaring Bosnian sovereignty.

On 15 October 1991 the Parliament of Bosnia Herzegovina declared the republic's sovereignty. The declaration was not intended to give Bosnia full independence but only "legislative sovereignty within Yugoslavia, so that it would be able, in legal theory at least, to pass laws overriding the federal army's rights to use its territory."<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Warren Zimmermann, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Noel Malcolm, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

The Bosnian Serbs did not accept it, however. The Bosnian Serb deputies walked out of the 15 October 1991 session and responded by establishing the "Assembly of the Serbian Nation of Bosnia Herzegovina" on 24 October. Furthermore, on 9 January 1992, the newly established Bosnian Serb assembly declared an "Autonomous Republic of the Serbian People of Bosnia Herzegovina." The new "autonomous republic" naturally contradicted the Bosnian Muslim will for independence. In response, President Izetbegovic called for a referendum regarding Bosnia's full independence.

In the referendum held on 29 February 1992, 99.4 per cent of the Bosnians voted for independence, although the true proportion was probably 63 per cent, as most of the Bosnian Serbs boycotted the vote.<sup>18</sup> Bosnia nonetheless proclaimed its independence on 3 March 1992.

The declaration of independence escalated the crisis. Fighting erupted "between Muslim and Croatian irregulars, on the one hand, and Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) troops and Serbian irregulars, on the other."<sup>19</sup> On 30 March 1992, the federal army chief, General Adzic, announced that "his army was prepared to intervene to protect Serbs against 'open aggression.'"<sup>20</sup> As with the Serb irregulars, even before 30 March, the federal troops had apparently already taken the initiative in the bombing and shooting in Banja Luka, Bosanski Brod and Mostar. Indeed, at this early stage, the most sinister development was the arrival of Arkan's paramilitary forces in Bijeljina, after they had completed the "clean-up" operations in Vukovar. By 4 April, it had already been reported that there were corpses in the streets of Bijeljina. "Ethnic cleansing" was regularly reported in the Bosnian crisis thereafter. Unfortunately, when faced with the Bosnian crisis, the principal external powers reacted slowly and indecisively.

#### ***b. International Political-Military Developments***

On 6 April 1992, the European Community (EC) recognized Bosnia's independence. A day later, the United States also recognized Bosnian independence. On the same day, in support of the new independent Bosnia, UN Security Council Resolution

---

<sup>18</sup> Jolene Kay Jesse, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>20</sup> Noel Malcolm, op. cit., p. 236.



(UNSCR) 749 authorized deployment of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR). If the external powers had intervened earlier, they might have prevented the escalation of the crisis. But several calls for EC observers or UN troops had been previously denied.

First, on 11 September 1991, the EC had turned down President Izetbegovic's request for EC observers and the establishment of a demilitarized zone along the Croatian border. The EC thus missed a significant opportunity, since the request was made soon after the fighting in Croatia had spilled over into Bosnia. Instead, with an unprecedented lack of perspective, UNSCR 713 of 25 September 1991 called for a complete arms embargo on Yugoslavia. This initiative would have sinister effects at least until mid-1994, if not until the end of the war in Bosnia in late 1995.

Second, on 23 November 1991, after the first cease-fire brokered by the UN had come into force and Croatia had agreed to allow UN peacekeepers in the combat zones, the UNSC turned down Bosnia's request for the deployment of UN troops on its territory. It was another wasted opportunity, as it occurred after the Parliament of Bosnia had declared the republic's sovereignty on 15 October and the Bosnian Serbs had responded by forming their own assembly on 24 October.

Altogether, after the violence had erupted, the actions undertaken by the principal external powers in Bosnia were far from matching the high intensity of the fighting between the warring parties. However, the external powers had at least finally begun to pay attention to the war in Bosnia. Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats were thus no longer alone in their fight.

## **2. Western Failure (early 1992-early 1994)**

### ***a. Bosnian Political-Military Developments***

Although the leading external powers had become interested in the fate of Bosnia, the Bosnian Serbs would have by far the strongest forces in the conflict for at least two more years. With the initial direct and later indirect help of the JNA, together with Serb paramilitary groups, such as Arkan's Tigers, Mirko Jovic's "White Eagles," and Seselj's Cetniks, the Bosnian Serbs constantly took the initiative in the military operations during the second stage. Consequently, "using the advantage of surprise and

overwhelming superiority, the federal army and its paramilitary adjuncts carved out within the first five to six weeks an area of conquest covering more than 60 per cent of the entire Bosnian territory.”<sup>21</sup>

Because new Yugoslav federation composed up of Serbia and Montenegro was established on 27 April 1992, the JNA ceased, in theory, its direct support of the Bosnian Serbs in May 1992. Forced by the logic of the newly established situation, President Milosevic “announced that he would withdraw those soldiers in the army in Bosnia who were citizens of the new two-republic Yugoslavia; those who were Bosnian Serbs would be transferred, together with all the armaments and supplies, to the so-called ‘Serb Republic,’ and placed under the command of General Ratko Mladic.”<sup>22</sup> This cosmetic exercise proved successful. As a consequence, prominent Western politicians, such as the British Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, began to describe the “fighting in Bosnia as a ‘civil war.’”<sup>23</sup>

Under such circumstances, the main opposition to the Bosnian Serbs’ advance came from 15,000 Croat fighters of the “Croat Defense Council” (HVO) and 15,000 Croat regular army troops. In late May 1992 they began a counter-offensive that “after more than a month of fighting, succeeded in pushing the federal army forces away from the Mostar region.”<sup>24</sup> Building on this initial success, on 16 June 1992, Presidents Izetbegovic and Tudjman signed a formal military alliance between Bosnia and Croatia that would legitimize the use of both regular Croat army troops and HVO combatants. Also, a Croat-Muslim joint defense committee was established on 23 September 1992.

Yet the Croat-Muslim cooperation in the military field was far from being fully paralleled in the political realm. Consistent with his pursuit of independence, President Izetbegovic turned down Croat initiatives regarding a confederation of Bosnia and Croatia. In response, in early July 1992, Mate Boban, the leader of the Bosnian Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), “declared the creation of the ‘Croat Community of

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 239.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 240.

Herceg-Bosnia,' and a kind of Croat Autonomous Region,"<sup>25</sup> in the Croat-controlled areas of Bosnia (about one-third of total area).<sup>26</sup> Naturally, the Bosnian government declared that these entities were illegal.

The weak Croat-Bosnian political cooperation generated two major negative outcomes in the long run. Firstly, their combined military capabilities opposed to the Bosnian Serb forces were too weak. Secondly, the Croat and Muslim forces eventually turned against each other. Consequently, the Bosnian Serbs were able to achieve military mastery at the expense of the Croat and Muslim forces.

After the Bosnian Serbs had heavily shelled Sarajevo on 21 April and 12 May 1992, the Croat and Muslim militias in Travnik and Pozor turned against each other and some clashes took place in mid-October. Croats gained control over three cities, and 28,000 people fled. Seizing the opportunity, the Bosnian Serbs took control of the Bosanski Brod region on the border between Croatia and Bosnia, and 8,000 refugees escaped to Croatia later in the same month. Thus by the end of 1992, the Serbs controlled 70 per cent of Bosnia; the Croats, at war with the Bosnian government, held 20 per cent; and the Muslim-dominated Bosnian government administered only the remaining 10 per cent of the country.<sup>27</sup> The overall military situation would remain essentially unchanged during the next year.

In early 1993, the Serbs were initially "pushed back in several areas, especially the Bratunac region of the Drina valley."<sup>28</sup> In April 1993, however, they took the military initiative and stepped up their offensives around Muslim enclaves in eastern Bosnia designated as Muslim areas under the Vance-Owen peace plan.<sup>29</sup> On 18 April 1993, a cease-fire gave the Serbs control over Srebrenica, and UNPROFOR was obliged to evacuate 30,000 Muslims. Later in the month, keeping 300,000 Muslims under constant siege, the Serbs strengthened their offensive against Bihac and also intensified

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>26</sup> Jolene Kay Jesse, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> Stanley Meisler, *United Nations: The First Fifty Years* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), p. 317.

<sup>28</sup> Noel Malcolm, op. cit., p. 249.

<sup>29</sup> Jolene Kay Jesse, op. cit., p. 14.

their operations against Goradze, Gradacac, and Tuzla.<sup>30</sup> The resulting territorial gains would remain within the Serb-conquered area of eastern Bosnia.<sup>31</sup>

The Bosnian Croats and Muslims kept on fighting against each other for most of 1993. In February 1993, "Muslim forces in Gornji Zakuf were besieged by HVO soldiers, and in the area between Vitez and Kiseljak both Muslim and Croat militias engaged in what one report described as 'freelance ethnic cleansing.'" <sup>32</sup> By April 1993, there were outbreaks of heavy fighting between the Croats and Muslims in the Travnik-Vitez-Zenica area of central Bosnia.<sup>33</sup> However, the cease-fire the Croats and Muslims signed on 29 April 1993<sup>34</sup> would not prevent their forces from fighting each other in central Bosnia and particularly in the Mostar area for the remainder of the year.<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, another major conflict between non-Serbs took place in northwestern Bosnia, where the Bihac pocket, a predominantly Muslim area, had become the power base of two contending forces. There was the Fifth Corps of the Bosnian Army, on the one hand, and the large personal following of Fikret Abdic, a famous local politician, on the other. The crisis began on 27 September 1993, when "Abdic proclaimed the 'Autonomous Province of Western Bosnia'" <sup>36</sup> and thus destabilized this area of considerable strategic importance. The crisis favored the Serbs by creating a split in Muslim unity that contributed greatly to the overall destabilization of Bosnia and to Croat-Muslim military weakness.

Conversely, neither the arms embargo the UN had introduced in September 1991 nor the actions intended to end the crisis that major external powers had undertaken would significantly degrade the strength of the Serb military. The embargo had been introduced against Yugoslavia as a whole in 1991, when it was formally a single country. However, since the situation in 1992 was completely different, with several successor states in contention, the embargo openly favored the Serbs. While Yugoslavia

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>31</sup> Noel Malcolm, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 248.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>34</sup> Jolene Kay Jesse, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>35</sup> Noel Malcolm, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 255.

was now disintegrating, among all the former Yugoslav republics, Serbia held most of the armaments and equipment stockpiles of the former JNA. Also, most of the key armaments factories in Bosnia were located in predominantly Serb areas. (For example, the Bosnian Serbs had seized the artillery shell factory in the Vogosca district outside Sarajevo at the beginning of the war.<sup>37</sup>)

Therefore, the equipment the warring parties held during this stage perfectly mirrored the new strategic and territorial situation. Estimates in September 1992 indicated that non-Serb Bosnians "possessed two tanks and two armored personnel carriers (APCs), while the Serb army in Bosnia had 300 tanks, 200 APCs, 800 artillery pieces and 40 aircraft. A later estimate, in June 1993, was that the arms captured by Bosnians included up to 40 tanks and 30 APCs, together with a larger number of light artillery pieces; the Croat forces were thought to have roughly 50 tanks and more than 100 artillery pieces."<sup>38</sup> By early 1994 it was also clear that, for their part, the major external powers had both militarily and diplomatically done too little to create a more balanced situation and effectively end the ongoing war in Bosnia.

#### ***b. International Political-Military Developments***

On 16 May 1992, the UN withdrew most of the peacekeeping troops already deployed to Sarajevo as a result of UNSCR 749. This was partly because of the intensive attack Sarajevo had come under, but it was also because of the personal initiative of the UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Indeed, UNPROFOR had proved too weak to properly deal with the Bosnian war. According to figures released by the UNHCR and local Red Cross Committees, during the refugee crisis in July 1992, UNPROFOR could not help the 2,500,000 people displaced in all of Yugoslavia, with 10,000 Bosnians displaced daily.<sup>39</sup>

In response, on 13 August 1992, UNSCR 770 authorized "all measures necessary" to ensure delivery of humanitarian aid, authorizing, in other words, the use of

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 243.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 243.

<sup>39</sup> Jolene Kay Jesse, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

force as a last resort. "This was the kind of wording that allowed President Bush to pursue the Persian Gulf War,"<sup>40</sup> but this time the resolution was not implemented.

To the same end, on 10 September 1992, Boutros Boutros-Ghali asked the UNSC to enlarge UNPROFOR's mandate to include the protection of humanitarian assistance. On 14 September, he requested better protection of aid shipments. The UN Security Council approved the expansion of UNPROFOR by up to 6,000 personnel, but UNPROFOR was still too weak to implement any UNSC resolution. Consequently, the Serbs ignored a 6 September 1992 communiqué of the Permanent Conference on Yugoslavia announcing that all heavy weaponry was to be placed under UN supervision by 12 September. Similarly, UNSCR 781, which banned military flights over Bosnia, would be immediately defied by the Serbs. Altogether, the UN's intervention continued to be ineffective in 1993.

On 6 April 1993, UNSCR 824 declared Tuzla, Zepa, Goradze, Bihac and Srebrenica "safe areas" and ordered all parties to ensure that they remained free from "armed attacks or any other hostile act."<sup>41</sup> Later, on 12 April, based on UNSCR 816, NATO began to enforce the "no-fly zone" over Bosnia. The Serbs nonetheless defied the UN once again by taking control of Srebrenica on 18 April and stepping up their offensives against Bihac, Goradze, and Tuzla on 27 April.

According to Noel Malcolm, "The final death-warrant for Bosnia was written on 22 May [1993] in Washington, at a gathering of the foreign ministers of Britain, France, Spain, Russia and the USA."<sup>42</sup> The resulting "Washington Accord" pledged the use of NATO air strikes to protect UN forces, but not Bosnian civilians, in the "safe areas."<sup>43</sup> Consequently, on 4 June, UNSCR 836 allowed UNPROFOR to use force to reply to attacks against the six "safe areas"<sup>44</sup> but only if the UN troops themselves came under attack and not if Muslims were shot.<sup>45</sup> The major external powers had admitted that they were still unwilling to pay the prize for changing the Bosnian

---

<sup>40</sup> Stanley Meisler, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

<sup>41</sup> Jolene Kay Jesse, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>42</sup> Noel Malcolm, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

<sup>43</sup> Jolene Kay Jesse, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>45</sup> Noel Malcolm, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

status quo. This was also the case diplomatically. By early 1994, there was a long list of unsuccessful peace initiatives; and the peace plans had merely mirrored the military situation on the ground.

The Permanent Conference on Yugoslavia that had opened in Geneva on 3 September 1992 was co-chaired by the EC negotiator, Lord Owen, and the UN negotiator, Cyrus Vance. In late October 1992 the two negotiators produced the first detailed proposal for a political settlement in Bosnia. It was formally issued in January 1993, when all three warring parties met in Geneva to negotiate. Put together originally by Martti Ahtisaari, a Finnish diplomat, the plan called for turning Bosnia into a set of ten autonomous provinces: "three dominated by Muslims, three by Serbs, three by Croats, and the tenth (Sarajevo) administered jointly by the three ethnic groups. Under this arrangement, the Serbs would have had 43 per cent of the territory, the Muslims 36 per cent, and the Croats 21 per cent."<sup>46</sup> The plan was immediately accepted by the Croats and, under American pressure, signed by President Izetbegovic on 25 March 1993. But the Serbs refused to accept it. The March 1993 offensive had given them hopes for more.

The Serbs' assessment proved accurate. After the rejection of the Vance-Owen plan, Lord Owen and the Norwegian Foreign Minister, Thordvald Stoltenberg, drew up a new peace plan. Bosnia was now "to be carved up into a three-part 'confederation' of mini-republics, the borders of which would, to some extent, legitimize the military conquests of the previous two years."<sup>47</sup> The plan did not respect the 44/31/17 per cent ethnic ratio among the Bosnian Muslims, Serbs, and Croats. It allocated the Bosnian Serbs 53 per cent of the Bosnian territory, the Bosnian Muslims 30 per cent and the Bosnian Croats 17 per cent. Neither the Muslims nor the Croats could accept this peace plan, while the Serbs replied by coming up with some unacceptable proposals regarding a divided Sarajevo. In effect, it was simply another peace plan that undermined the chances for a diplomatically achieved settlement in Bosnia.

The military situation on the ground and the failure of international diplomatic efforts to bring a peaceful solution made late 1993 and early 1994 the nadir of

---

<sup>46</sup> Stanley Meisler, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

<sup>47</sup> Noel Malcolm, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

Bosnia's fortunes. Western governments seemed to be planning to withdraw their UNPROFOR troops "as a recognition that all their policies had failed."<sup>48</sup> Yet 1994 was to be the turning point in Bosnia's fate.

### 3. Toward Conflict Resolution in Bosnia (early 1994-late 1995)

#### *a. Bosnian Political-Military Developments*

There were four noteworthy military developments in 1994. First, on 17 February 1994, the Bosnian Serbs executed a large-scale withdrawal of equipment from around Sarajevo following a Russian intervention.<sup>49</sup> Second, in August the Fifth Corps of the Bosnian army succeeded in defeating the forces of Fikret Abdic and driving them out of the Bihac pocket. Third, in October the Fifth Corps of the Bosnian army broke out of the Bihac pocket and achieved large territorial gains (several hundred square kilometers). Fourth, in November the joint offensive of the Seventh Corps of the Bosnian army and the HVO against the Serbs in central Bosnia led to the capture of the town of Kupres.<sup>50</sup> Yet, although they had been partially and temporarily deprived of the military initiative and thus, for the first time since the beginning of the war in 1992, their vulnerability had been demonstrated, in 1994 the Bosnian Serbs definitely were still stronger than their Bosnian Croat and Muslim opponents.

On 5 February 1994, the Bosnian Serbs killed sixty-eight and injured 197 civilians during a mortar attack on Sarajevo. In late March, they also heavily bombed the "safe areas." On 28 March, the bombardment of the "safe area" of Goradze killed thirty and wounded one hundred and thirty-two civilians. But for Goradze this was just the beginning of its suffering since, after heavy fighting, it effectively fell to Serb forces on 22 April 1994.

The second half of 1994 witnessed two major Serb offensive actions. The first took place in September, when, using Serb troops from both Bosnia and Croatia, General Ratko Mladic attacked the Bihac pocket. Also, in addition to their military

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>49</sup> Jolene Kay Jesse, op. cit., p. 16

<sup>50</sup> Noel Malcolm, op. cit., p. 259.



offensive, to starve the civilian population into submission, the Serbs also enforced such an efficient blockade of Bihac that by November, 131 UN convoys had been turned back by their roadblocks.<sup>51</sup> The offensive that followed the blockade was once again directed against the Bihac pocket. It lasted for almost all of November.

By December 1994, the warring parties had reached a *de facto* stalemate. "The events had illustrated both the strengths and weakness of the Bosnian government forces. In manpower and morale they were now superior to the Serb army; if they were fully supported by Croat heavy weaponry, they could make significant gains against the Serbs."<sup>52</sup> Because Serb military power had declined while Muslim military power had insufficiently increased, the former lacked enough forces to complete its conquests, while the latter lacked the strength to decisively counter-attack. Consequently, in December 1994, both sides were happy to sign the Carter-negotiated four-month "total cessation of hostilities."<sup>53</sup> They "had accepted this cease-fire only because they needed more time to build up their forces for the spring campaign."<sup>54</sup> Yet the Serbs were still stronger and better equipped militarily. According to estimates made by the Croatian General Karl Gornisek in October 1994, the Bosnian Muslims had 45 tanks (the number had significantly increased, from 2 in September 1992 and about 40 in June 1993), while the Serbs had 400. The military situation on the ground was, however, to change crucially in 1995. It reflected the completion of the political changes initiated in February 1994.

The end of the four-month cease-fire in 1995 found the Serbs, on the one hand, and the Croats and the Muslims, on the other, in an unprecedented struggle consisting of a long sequence of significant blows. In April and May 1995, the Bosnian Serbs vigorously attacked the Bihac pocket and the Croat-held sector north of the Serb-held "corridor" in northeastern Bosnia. The Bosnian government forces responded by making significant gains around Travnik and in the mountains south of Sarajevo.

On 1 and 2 May 1995, in an extremely successful military operation, Croatian army units restored the Croatian government's control over the entire Serb-held

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>53</sup> Jolene Kay Jesse, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>54</sup> Noel Malcolm, op. cit., p. 261.

area of Western Slavonia. The Serbs responded with one of the heaviest artillery bombardments of Sarajevo. In late May, the Serbs also conducted artillery bombardments of all the UN "safe areas.

They pounded the Srebrenica city center with half a dozen well-placed rounds and lofted into Tuzla a mortar shell that exploded among a crowd of young people . . . killing seventy-five teenagers (whose shattered remains went unobserved by any television camera and thus remained, unlike the celebrated sixty-eight dead of Sarajevo, a little-known statistic).<sup>55</sup>

In mid-June 1995 a large-scale offensive of the Bosnian army attempted to break through Serb lines around Sarajevo and took some territory. "But the main Serb positions surrounding the city were too well dug in to be dislodged by an army which was still so under-equipped in the crucial area of heavy weaponry."<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the Serbs retaliated by shelling civilian areas in Sarajevo.

It was now the Serbs' turn to seize the initiative by capturing two of the UN "safe areas." On 11 July 1995, they took Srebrenica. Two weeks after taking Srebrenica, they captured Zepa, another UN "safe area." The Croats struck back on 5 August, when a well-planned and rapid offensive gave them almost complete control of the entire Krajina region. The collapse of the Serb strength in the Krajina region must have definitely had a damaging effect on Serb morale in Bosnia. However, the Serbs retaliated in their usual way. On 28 August 1995, a Serb mortar attack on Sarajevo killed thirty-seven people and wounded eighty-eight. This action helped to provoke intervention by the major external powers.

In September 1995, a combined operation by Croat and Bosnian government forces brought the Bosnian Serbs close to defeat. The Croats and the Bosnian Muslims made dramatic territorial gains in northwestern Bosnia. The Croats and Bosnian Muslims took "Donji Vakuf on the 13<sup>th</sup> and Jajce on the following day; by the 17<sup>th</sup> they controlled the road connecting Jajce with Bihac, and were pressing on towards the Serb

---

<sup>55</sup> Mark Danner, "Bosnia: Breaking the Machine," *The New York Review of Books*, February 19, 1998, p. 41.

<sup>56</sup> Noel Malcolm, op. cit., p. 263.

stronghold of Banja Luka, attacking the key towns of Sanski Most and Prijedor as they did so.”<sup>57</sup> On 19 September 1995, when the American and British governments were putting pressure on the Croats to halt the offensive, the Bosnian Serbs had already lost roughly 15 per cent of the total area of the country. Given this dramatic change in Bosnia’s circumstances, the Serbs were now willing to begin the peace talks. The general agreement announced at Dayton, Ohio, on 21 November 1995 was the result of a long political process that had begun in early 1994. The gradually deeper military involvement of the interested external powers in Bosnia proceeded in parallel with this political process.

#### ***b. International Political-Military Developments***

The 5 February 1994 mortar attack on Sarajevo helped to bring about a fundamental change in the attitude of the United States and other NATO countries. It was a turning point that initiated two major developments with crucial effects on Bosnia’s fate.

First, on the initiative of the United States and France, NATO policy on Bosnia took a new and positive course. The meeting of NATO ambassadors on 9 February 1994 led to an agreement to implement any future UN request for air strikes. Furthermore, NATO declared a 20 km “exclusion zone” for heavy weaponry around Sarajevo and warned the Serb commanders that air strikes would be conducted against them, unless their forces were withdrawn by midnight on 20 February. The Bosnian Serbs complied. Following a Russian intervention they executed on 17 February a large-scale withdrawal of equipment from around Sarajevo. The external powers had for the first time made their threats regarding the use of force credible. Further developments in 1994 were not, however, consistent with that early enthusiasm.

Second, a new American policy not only ended the Croat-Muslim conflict but also *de facto* lifted the arms embargo on Bosnia. An important role in ending the conflict was played by the “Council of Bosnian-Herzegovian Croats.” On 6 February 1994, the Council declared itself in favor of preserving the territorial integrity of Bosnia;

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 266-267.

and the new course of Bosnian Croat-Muslim relations it thus established made possible the cease-fire agreement the Bosnian government and Croat forces signed on 23 February 1994.

It was only the persuasive "assistance" of the U.S. government that made the Croats and the Bosnian Muslims conclude a formal political agreement. The agreement stipulated the creation of a Muslim ("Bosniak")-Croat Federation<sup>58</sup> and the "preliminary agreement on the establishment of a confederation between the Bosnian federation and Croatia."<sup>59</sup> According to Michael McAdams' account, "In March 1994, US President Bill Clinton presided over a forced marriage of Croatia and Bosnia into a federation. For both it was a marriage of convenience resented by many in the populations of both sides."<sup>60</sup> The agreement nonetheless ended the war between the Croats and the Muslims in central Bosnia.

Owing to the same Croat-Muslim agreement, the arms embargo on Bosnia informally ceased to exist in the spring of 1994. In April 1994, President Tudjman had asked US Ambassador Galbraith about the U.S. government's position should Croatia resume transshipment of weapons to Bosnia. Galbraith replied that on the matter of weapon transshipments he had received "no instructions." This was the "green light" Tudjman had been waiting for. Two years later, in their report on this matter, U.S. senators concluded that "with the 'no instructions' decision American policy had in fact 'changed from one of telling other countries that the United Nations arms embargo must be obeyed to one of looking the other way as arms flowed from Iran and other countries into Bosnia and Croatia.'"<sup>61</sup>

Consequently, in the spring of 1994 heavy unmarked cargo airplanes began to transport crates of assault rifles, rocket launchers, grenades, and ammunition to Zagreb. Their journey had begun in the vast and largely American-stocked arms warehouses of the Islamic Republic of Iran. A customary third was put aside by the Croats as a fee for their serving as the middleman. Then convoys were set for Bosnia. By

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 256.

<sup>59</sup> Jolene Kay Jesse, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>60</sup> Michael C. McAdams, *Croatia: Myth and Reality. The Final Chapter* (Arcadia, California: CIS Monographs, 1997), p. 34.

mid-1994, this initially secret airlift had grown into a highly organized operation that would carry tons of arms from Turkey and Saudi Arabia as well as Iran.<sup>62</sup> The Serbs were nonetheless still stronger militarily and therefore an enduring peace settlement was not feasible yet.

In May 1994, the interested external powers came up with a new proposal regarding a peaceful solution for the ongoing war in Bosnia. "A 'Contact Group,' consisting of Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States put forward a new 'peace plan.'"<sup>63</sup> The plan preserved the integrity of Bosnia in theory, but in fact it would divide the country's territory, with 51 per cent going to the Muslim-Croat Federation and 49 per cent to the Serbs. The Muslims and the Croats eventually accepted it as the lesser evil. Indeed, 51 per cent going to the Muslim-Croat Federation was much better than the "Plan B" of the Contact Group diplomats, which might have allowed the Serb-controlled half of Bosnia to make separate confederation arrangements with Serbia.<sup>64</sup>

The Bosnian Serbs rejected the plan in a "referendum" staged on 19 and 20 August 1994. This rejection displeased the Serbian President, Slobodan Milosevic, who believed that the Contact Group plan gave the Bosnian Serbs everything they needed.<sup>65</sup> Had he been able to make the Bosnian Serbs accept it in 1994, the Bosnians would have had their "Dayton" peace settlement much earlier. However, it was now clear that real progress could be made only on the battlefield and not in the negotiating chamber.

Unfortunately, after their initial success on 17 February 1994, the interested external powers found themselves divided between and within NATO and the UN regarding the use of force during the rest of 1994. Consequently, with the exception of the NATO air strikes on 5 August and on 21, 23, and 25 November, the external powers did not do much for the remainder of 1994. Even when Serb artillery bombarded the UN safe areas, "the UN took no measures to fulfill its mandate, which required it

---

<sup>61</sup> Mark Danner, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>63</sup> Noel Malcolm, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

(under Security Council resolution 836) to 'deter attacks against the safe areas.'"<sup>66</sup> The 400 UN hostages the Serbs reportedly detained on 27 November 1994 in a bid to deter further air strikes put the advocates of bombing in a delicate situation.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, on 6 December 1994, the Serbs were still holding 311 UN staff in detention.<sup>68</sup>

The UN hostages also played an important role in 1995. On 25 May 1995, after the Serbs had defied the UN ultimatum that demanded that they cease firing on Sarajevo, NATO air strikes hit two ammunition bunkers near the Bosnian Serb "capital" of Pale.<sup>69</sup> This time, besides conducting artillery bombardments on UN safe areas, the Serbs initiated what would be called the "hostage crisis" by taking hostage more than 360 UN personnel and chaining them to the ammunition bunker doors and other potential targets. Their policy worked, at least in one respect: NATO air strikes ceased. The air strikes resumed three months later, however, under totally different circumstances.

On 30 August 1995, after the Serbs defied the ultimatum the UN and NATO had issued as a result of the Serb mortar attack on a Sarajevo market two days before, NATO began its Deliberate Force air operation. By now, the UN-NATO "dual key" system of decision-making had been streamlined and the last group of UN troops had just recently been withdrawn from Goradze. The 3,000 NATO sorties eliminated the Serb air defenses, destroyed large amounts of ammunition, and forced General Mladic to withdraw most of his weaponry from the Sarajevo "exclusion zone." The Deliberate Force Operation had been preceded by the Croats' highly effective offensive against the Serb-held Krajina in early August and, in its turn, NATO's air operation preceded the extremely effective combined offensive of the Croat and Bosnian government forces against the Serbs in north-western Bosnia in mid-September. Having been abandoned by Milosevic, the Bosnian Serbs were now ready to negotiate about the previous Contact Group plan. Yet it was Milosevic who eventually signed the Dayton peace agreement that would bring Bosnia peace.

---

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 259.

<sup>67</sup> Jolene Kay Jesse, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>69</sup> Mark Danner, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

At an initial meeting in Geneva on 8 September 1995 the belligerents accepted the same territorial division proposed earlier: 51 per cent for the Croat-Muslim Federation and 49 per cent for the Bosnian Serbs. An accord at a follow-up meeting in New York on 26 September included the preservation of both the Muslim-Croat Federation and the "Serb Republic." "The tension between these two conflicting tendencies — *de facto* division, on the one hand, and *de jure* preservation of Bosnia on the other —"<sup>70</sup> had thus been accepted. This tension persisted in the American-led negotiations in Dayton, which announced the conclusion of a general agreement on 21 November 1995. It included "a territorial settlement (maintaining the 51/49 per cent division between the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Serb Republic), a new constitution, various mechanisms for the protection of human rights, the return of refugees and the construction of an international force, under NATO leadership, of 60,000 troops to supervise the cessation of hostilities."<sup>71</sup> Following the signing of the Bosnian Peace Agreement by the presidents of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia in Paris on 14 December 1995, UNSCR 1031 on 15 December 1995 established the legal foundation of the year-long NATO-led multinational Implementation Force (IFOR).

**C. POST-DAYTON DEVELOPMENTS IN BOSNIA (SINCE DECEMBER 1995)**

Also called Operation Joint Endeavor, IFOR was "NATO's first ground force operation, its first-ever deployment 'out of area,' and its first-ever joint operation with NATO's Partnership for Peace partners and other non-NATO countries."<sup>72</sup> Indeed, eighteen non-NATO nations contributed forces to the 60,000 IFOR troops. There were fourteen PfP partners (Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Russia, Sweden, Ukraine), three Mediterranean Dialogue nations (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco), and Malaysia.

---

<sup>70</sup> Noel Malcolm, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.

<sup>72</sup> David S. Yost, *NATO Transformed: The Alliance's New Roles in International Security* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), p. 195.

According to the Peace Agreement signed in Paris on 14 December 1995, IFOR's task was to implement the military aspects of the agreement. IFOR was to undertake the following primary military tasks:

- ensuring the parties' compliance with the cease-fire;
- ensuring the withdrawal of forces from the agreed zones of separation (ZOSs);
- ensuring the collection of heavy weapons and demobilization of remaining forces;
- facilitating the safe withdrawal of non-IFOR UN forces; and
- controlling the Bosnian air space.<sup>73</sup>

By successfully fulfilling its military tasks, IFOR played a pivotal role in the peace process in Bosnia. By 19 January 1996 the parties to the Peace Agreement had withdrawn their forces from the zones of separation, thereby completing the transfer of territory among Bosnian entities. By 18 April 1996 all heavy weapons and forces were in cantonments or demobilized. After the peaceful conduct of the September 1996 elections, IFOR had successfully completed its mission in Bosnia.<sup>74</sup> Yet the environment was still far from secure and much was left to be done on the civilian side.

Under the auspices of the Peace Implementation Council established under the Peace Agreement, a two-year plan regarding the consolidation of peace in Bosnia after the expiration of the IFOR mandate was established in Paris and elaborated in London in November and December 1996. Based on this plan, NATO Foreign and Defense Ministers concluded that a reduced military presence was still necessary for the consolidation of the peace process in Bosnia.<sup>75</sup>

Consequently, under UNSCR 1088 of 12 December 1996, operating under Chapter VII of the UN Charter (peace enforcement), an eighteen-month Stabilization Force (SFOR) was activated as the legal successor of IFOR on 20 December 1996, the day on which IFOR's mandate expired. Besides all NATO nations, twenty-two non-NATO nations contributed forces to the 31,000 SFOR troops. There were the same

---

<sup>73</sup> *The NATO Handbook* (Brussels, Belgium: Office of Information and Press, 1998-1999), pp. 120-121.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.



eighteen countries that had contributed to IFOR and four new ones: Argentina, Ireland, Slovakia, and Slovenia. While preserving the same rules of engagement, SFOR's specific tasks have addressed the consolidation of the peace process and have thus included:

- deterring and thereby preventing the resumption of hostilities;
- consolidating the IFOR's achievements; and
- selective support to civilian organizations.<sup>76</sup>

Like its IFOR predecessor, SFOR has been a successful military operation. Yet mainly because the Peace Agreement's civilian provisions remain again far from being implemented, the antagonism and conflict in Bosnia were still far from being fully extinguished several months before the expiration of SFOR's mandate in June 1998. The Dayton settlement had been agreed to by the warring parties only under considerable pressure from the United States and therefore it was widely recognized that "Lasting peace in Bosnia — and in the rest of the former Yugoslavia — may be feasible only when an enduring cessation of hostilities is imposed, obliging the local ethnic groups to live and work together."<sup>77</sup> Consequently, on the basis of North Atlantic Council decisions in December 1997, in February 1998 it was agreed that "SFOR's mandate would be extended indefinitely."<sup>78</sup>

Yet at least two major problems seriously challenge the success and even the future of the NATO-led SFOR operation. The first is the chronic lack of implementation for the most part of the civil, economic, political and judicial provisions of the Peace Agreement. Second, as U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen stated before the U.S. Congress in 1997, the U.S. commitment in Bosnia cannot be unlimited.<sup>79</sup>

Solving the two problems will oblige decision-makers to deal with two major dilemmas. The former concerns whether the NATO-led SFOR operation should implement the non-military provisions of the Peace Agreement, given that the implementation of the military measures alone cannot bring an enduring peace to the

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>77</sup> David S. Yost, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 218.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 218.

region and that the very attempt to implement the non-military measures might “endanger SFOR’s current mandate, to say nothing of its longer-term sustainability.”<sup>80</sup> The latter dilemma concerns whether the Bosnian government alone will be capable of ensuring the conditions necessary for the continuation of the peace process initiated in 1995. Official U.S. policy holds that the new SFOR mission “is by no means open-ended,”<sup>81</sup> while the Europeans, committed to an “all in together, all out together”<sup>82</sup> policy, will withdraw their troops as soon as the Americans withdraw theirs. The West’s answers to these questions will shape Bosnia’s fate.

---

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>81</sup> President Clinton quoted in *ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>82</sup> Field Marshal Sir Peter Inge quoted in *ibid.*, p. 218.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

#### IV. A FAILURE OF THE WEST

The horrors of the wars in the former Yugoslavia raise three questions that highlight failures in Western policy since the early 1990s. First, was the war avoidable? Second, were the interested external powers (the NATO countries, plus Russia in the Contact Group) indeed successful in stopping the killing and preventing partition in Bosnia? Third, did the West make effective use of its military capabilities and seize the opportunities the situation on the ground offered?

Initially, for many months before the outbreak of fighting in June 1991, the European Community (EC) and the United States tried to prevent the growing crisis from erupting into war, but they failed. Then, after the began, the NATO and EC countries proved once again unable to take control of the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia. As Noel Malcolm put it in 1995, "The sky has been dark with airplanes shuttling statesmen and their entourages between London, Paris, Washington and Geneva. Meetings have been held, deferred and reconvened; pieces of papers have been signed, and declarations made to the television cameras. And yet, in spite of all of this — or rather, to a large extent, because of all this — the killing and destruction in Bosnia have continued unabated."<sup>1</sup> Finally, when an opportunity was at hand to give Bosnia an enduring peace based on an equilibrium among the local belligerents, the West preferred to impose an instant peace and stopped military developments before the local equilibrium could be established.

These three failures add up to what Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch call a catastrophic failure.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, in the Bosnian case it was initially an anticipatory failure that did not look to the future, then a learning failure that had its roots in the past, and finally an adaptive failure that mishandled a changing present. When such catastrophic failures occur, there may be no escape from absolute disaster. Alternatively, a last minute dramatic change in the actors' behavior may avoid disaster by a very narrow margin. The failure was not consistent throughout all the security decision-making and executive

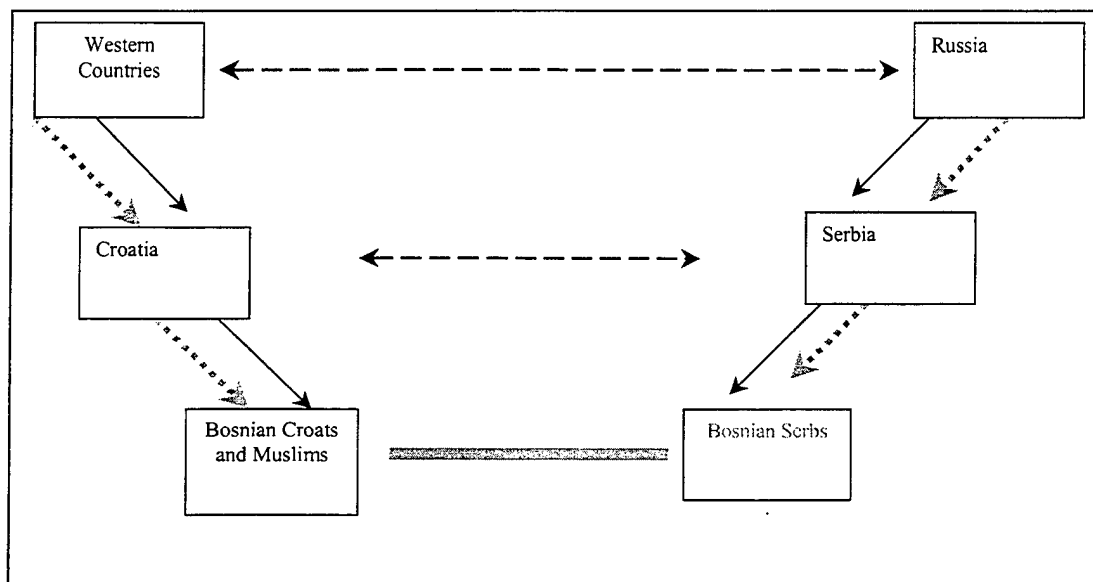
---

<sup>1</sup> Noel Malcolm, "Bosnia and the West: A Study in Failure," *The National Interest*, No. 39 (Spring 1995), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), pp. 26-27.

levels. Therefore, there is no formula for selecting the right levels of authority to examine when analyzing failures; this can only be determined on a case by case basis. Levels of political decision making and military command may vary in importance depending on both their responsibilities and the nature of the conflict in question.

The analysis below follows Huntington's three-level scheme<sup>3</sup> regarding the structure of a complex fault line war displayed in Figure 1. The thesis does not consider



#### LEGEND

	Violence
	Support
	Restraint
	Negotiation

Figure 1. Three Level Conflict Chart

any shortcomings of Huntington's fault line conflict concept but simply uses his concept, because it is helpful in understanding the dynamics of the war in Bosnia. The scheme displays a three-level interaction with at least six parties and at least seven relations

<sup>3</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), p. 274.

among them. Horizontal relations across the fault lines exist between pairs of primary, secondary, and tertiary parties. Vertical relations exist between the parties on different levels on each side.<sup>4</sup>

The former Yugoslavia has been a complex and confused site for such a scheme. In Huntington's words, "At the primary level, in Croatia the Croatian government and Croats fought the Croatian Serbs, and in Bosnia-Herzegovina the Bosnian government fought the Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats, who also fought each other. At the secondary level, the Serbian government promoted a 'Greater Serbia' by helping Bosnian and Croatian Serbs, and the Croatian government aspired to a 'Greater Croatia' and supported the Bosnian Croats. At the tertiary level, massive civilizational rallying included: Germany, Austria, the Vatican, other European Catholic countries and groups, and later, the United States on behalf of Croatia; Russia, Greece, and other Orthodox countries and groups behind the Serbs; and Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Libya, the Islamist international, and Islamic countries generally on behalf of the Bosnian Muslims."<sup>5</sup>

Huntington's scheme is also enlightening to a significant extent when applied to the way the war in Bosnia was eventually brought to an end. The halt in the fighting in a "full model" of the Bosnian war respected a scheme that requires:

- "active involvement of secondary and tertiary parties;
- negotiation by the tertiary parties of the broad terms for stopping the fighting;
- use by the tertiary parties of carrots and sticks to get the secondary parties to accept these terms and to pressure the primary parties to accept them;
- withdrawal of support from and, in effect, the betrayal of the primary parties by the secondary parties; and
- as a result of this pressure, acceptance of the terms by the primary parties, which, of course, they subvert when they see it in their interest to do so."<sup>6</sup>

Such a three-level scheme, apart from Huntington's civilizational fault line war concept based on the "kin country syndrome" approach, is useful in comprehending the

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 294.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 281.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 294.

complex dynamics of the Bosnian war. Furthermore, the scheme offers the appropriate levels required for a complex five-step analysis of the Western failures listed above.

## **A. A FAILURE TO ANTICIPATE**

### **1. What Was the Failure?**

The failure in Bosnia was that the West, despite having the necessary power and to some extent the will, proved incapable of preventing the war, even though its imminence had been obvious for a long time before it began. In the case of Yugoslavia, the world has always been aware of the nationalist tensions jeopardizing the unity of the country. "Discussion of this issue was not confined to classified government reports; it was pursued publicly by both journalists and academic analysts."<sup>7</sup>

The West had supported Tito's firm rule that had kept ethnic tensions under control. Tito's death left a Yugoslavia too decentralized for any ethnic group to dominate. Therefore it should have been obvious to Western observers that after 1980, nationalist pressures would almost certainly destabilize the country and could even lead to disintegration and civil war. Unfortunately, Western observers failed to recognize this probability. As Noel Malcolm points out,

Although commentators and analysts had been accurately charting the political strategy of the Serbian communist leader Slobodan Milosevic since 1988 — the take over of the political machinery in Montenegro and Vojvodina, the illegal suppression of the local government in Kosovo in 1989, the mobilization of nationalist feeling in Serbian public opinion, the slow-moving constitutional coup against the federal presidency, the Serbian blockade against Croatia and Slovenia in late 1990, the theft by Serbia that year of billions of dinars from the federal budget, thereby destroying the federal economic reform program, and the incitement and arming of Serb minorities in Croatia and Bosnia during 1990 and 1991 —

---

<sup>7</sup> Saadia Touval, "Lessons of Preventive Diplomacy in Yugoslavia," in Chester A. Crocker and Fen Osler Hampson with Pamela Aall, eds., *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), p. 404.

it was as if the Western governments could see no pattern in these events whatsoever.<sup>8</sup>

Not even in the eleventh hour of the republican elections in December 1990 did the West face the facts. Western governments failed again to see what was obvious: the elections had been a test of ethnic loyalty. The era of nationalism had begun. Yugoslavia was now disintegrating into different power centers, and local regions were developing particular nationalist ideologies, each different from the rest.

## **2. Critical Failures**

Several failures combined to frustrate Western efforts to prevent the war in Bosnia. Chief among these was the West's uninspired hasty push for democratization and economic reforms in the conditions specific to Yugoslavia in 1989-1991, its "inability to project an image of a clear and unambiguous stance and its lack of leverage."<sup>9</sup>

Western policies promoting economic reforms, respect for human rights, and democratization, the standard medicine for curing the world's ills, were applied to Yugoslavia as a preventive action. These policies not only failed to bring the expected results but also may have contributed to the aggravation of the country's problems in 1989-1991. The West had conditioned its economic assistance on the reforms the Yugoslav government was to undertake. The economic reforms desired were not, however, possible as they would have required returning to the central government powers the republics had held according to Tito's 1974 constitution. Consequently, the changes desired by the West both increased resistance to Belgrade and stimulated further the aspirations for independence in Croatia and Slovenia. When its traditional policies failed in Yugoslavia, the Western world proved incapable of defining any credible alternative policy. Instead of clarity the West's policy signaled ambiguity.

The ambiguity stemmed from the West's definition of goals in terms of broad values whose sometimes contradictory nature led the Yugoslav actors to varying interpretations of Western attitudes. The chief difficulty resided in the simultaneous

---

<sup>8</sup> Noel Malcolm, "Bosnia and the West: A Study in Failure," *The National Interest*, No. 39 (Spring 1995), p. 4.



advocacy of both unity and democratization. These two objectives were irreconcilable in the 1990-1991 Yugoslav context. To preserve unity implied to a certain extent to repress nationalist and centrifugal tendencies by violating human rights. For its part, democratization invited the formation of nationalist parties and the victory in free elections of the leaders advocating independence. As Saadia Touval has observed, "Thus attempts to preserve unity were antidemocratic, and the promotion of democracy encouraged disintegration. The contradiction inherent in Western goals gave them an air of ambiguity, making it difficult for Yugoslav leaders to predict how the West might react to their moves."<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, the West's strategy of conditioning financial assistance and trade concessions on the preservation of unity and the pursuit of reforms also lacked credibility. The ambiguity and equivocation of both the United States and the EU<sup>11</sup> cast doubt on the credibility of Western promises and threats.

Four factors shaped the U.S. response to the growing Yugoslav crisis. The first was the change in the country's strategic importance. Yugoslavia no longer affected vital American interests after the end of the Cold War. Second, American policy-makers doubted whether the United States could effectively influence events in Yugoslavia and were reluctant to face the prospect of deploying U.S. military forces for an active engagement in the crisis. The third factor was the West European claim that the EC ought to take care of the Yugoslav problem. Fourth, the United States could not completely detach itself from the growing crisis. As a result, American policy alternated between passivity and activism. "When active, it was marked by pontification on fundamental values and principles, accompanied by equivocations concerning the immediate issues on the agenda."<sup>12</sup> However, in essence, American policy complied with the Western rule of thumb: it aimed at achieving the goals of preserving unity and advancing reforms; and these goals were fundamentally incompatible in the case of Yugoslavia in 1990-1991.

---

<sup>9</sup> Saadia Touval, *op. cit.*, p. 403.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 406.

<sup>11</sup> The European Community (EC) became the European Union (EU) in November 1993.

<sup>12</sup> Saadia Touval, *op. cit.*, p. 408.

The Europeans were more motivated than the Americans to prevent the war but the most influential countries were too divided in their attitudes toward the Yugoslav problems to articulate a sound common European policy. The Germans blamed the instability and the outbreak of World War I on Serb nationalism and associated the establishment of Yugoslavia with the unjust peace settlements imposed on Germany at the end of the war in 1918. Similarly, the Italians had not favored the establishment of Yugoslavia, and the "territorial conflicts with Yugoslavia after both world wars had contributed to an unfavorable image of that country in Italian eyes."<sup>13</sup> Britain and France, however, had been allied with Serbia in World War I and supported the preservation of Yugoslavia.

These countries all had something in common, however. Each government attempted to "use the common [European] institutions to restrain the others from pursuing what it regarded as wrong-headed policies."<sup>14</sup> Consequently, in their attempt to present a common stance, the Europeans ended up by developing policies that reflected a compromise of their initial positions; and this could only result in ambiguity. That was clearly reflected in the policy statements regarding the Yugoslav crisis the EC's Council of Ministers and the European Commission issued. In short, like the Americans, the West Europeans ended up with contradictory goals in their policy toward the Yugoslav crisis. Like the Americans, they were simultaneously opposed to centrally enforced unity and to secession by unilateral acts.

Furthermore, "the ambiguity was reinforced by discrepancies between the collective European policies emanating from the European institutions and the policies of individual states conveyed in bilateral contacts."<sup>15</sup> Because they were aware of the divisions among the EC countries, the secessionist Croats, Slovenes, and Bosnians were naturally "more inclined to listen to their sympathizers that promised them support than to those that threatened them with punishment."<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 411.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 410.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 411.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 407.

The failure to articulate a clear and credible policy was consistent with the West's inability to take military actions aimed at preventing the war. The United States was not a major factor in the Yugoslav crisis between July 1991 and March 1992 and let the Europeans deal with the growing crisis.<sup>17</sup> During the summer of 1991 it was probably reasonable to let the EC deal with what the EC itself called a "European problem." When by autumn the Serbian plans to take over parts of Croatia had crystallized in attacks on Vukovar and Dubrovnik, the situation had certainly changed. "Yet no Western government at the time called on NATO's military force to get the JNA to stop shelling Dubrovnik, although NATO's supreme commander, General John Galvin, had prepared contingency plans for doing so. The use of force was simply too big a step [for NATO] in late 1991 . . . [If force had been used,] not only would damage to the city have been averted, but the Serbs would have been taught a lesson about Western resolve that might have deterred at least some of their aggression against Bosnia."<sup>18</sup>

Instead, the West then made another mistake. The EC members and the United States recognized Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia as independent states but failed to provide the appropriate military support.

### **3. Layered Analysis**

According to Mark Danner, the U.S. Administration is responsible for the failure of U.S. war prevention policy toward Bosnia in 1990-1992.

It was President George Bush who, during 1990 and 1991, largely ignored the ample signs of Yugoslavia's collapse; it was President Bush who after the Serbs attacked the Slovenes during July 1991, and despite changes enacted only seven months before that had explicitly made such "crisis management" part of the alliance's mission, chose to hand off the conflict to the Europeans — and to the militarily toothless European Union, not NATO; it was Bush who during late summer and fall of 1991 turned aside suggestions that American warplanes and ships attack Serb gunners shelling Dubrovnik and Vukovar; and Bush who in early 1992 turned aside a French suggestion that peacekeepers should be sent to Bosnia to prevent war from breaking out. Had President Bush made a different decision in

---

<sup>17</sup> Warren Zimmermann, "The Last Ambassador: A Memoir of the Collapse of Yugoslavia," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74 No. 2 (March/April 1995), p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

any or all of these cases, he might have succeeded in greatly circumscribing, or even preventing altogether, the Bosnian war.<sup>19</sup>

President Bush was not, however, the only person responsible for U.S. decisions regarding the Yugoslav war. The responsibility also resides with his advisers on security matters. In 1990-1992, Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger and Adviser for National Security Affairs Brent Scowcroft maintained a constant position opposed to any active U.S. engagement in Yugoslavia. Nor, until after Yugoslavia eventually broke apart, did a single member of Congress advocate the use of military force. There was a tacit consensus in America's leadership circles not to get the United States involved in the Bosnian crisis that Secretary of State James Baker had earlier summarized in a homely expression: "We got no dog in this fight."<sup>20</sup>

Yet Baker had been one of the very few officials who had advocated the introduction of American military power in the Yugoslav equation. Also, during his July 1991 visit to Yugoslavia, he had left a strong message with Prime Minister Markovic: "If you force the United States to choose between unity and democracy, we will always choose democracy."<sup>21</sup>

James Baker's message was right, but it was "too little, too late." According to Warren Zimmermann, "If a mistake was made, it was that the secretary of state had not come six months earlier, a time that unfortunately coincided with the massive American preparations for the Persian Gulf War."<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the visit brought too little clarification on the American policies. "The reassertion of American opposition to both secession and the enforcement of unity sounded like an equivocation, not a statement of policy."<sup>23</sup>

America's political leadership also bears responsibility because it took such inappropriate decisions regarding the Bosnian crisis in spite of numerous warnings by U.S. diplomats, intelligence analysts, scholars, and military experts. The American

---

<sup>19</sup> Mark Danner, "Slouching Toward Dayton," *The New York Review of Books*, April 23, 1998, pp. 60-61.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>21</sup> Warren Zimmermann, op. cit., p.12.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>23</sup> Saadia Touval, op. cit., p. 410.

Ambassador to Belgrade, Warren Zimmermann, had analyzed scenarios concerning potential developments in Yugoslavia. The worst-case scenario that Zimmermann and a group of political and economic officers in the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade could think of in early 1988 was the breakup of the country. They "reported to Washington that no breakup of Yugoslavia could happen peacefully."<sup>24</sup> But apparently this signal did not receive the appropriate attention.

When Croatia opted for independence in 1991, Zimmermann supported President Izetbegovic's request for the deployment of peacekeepers to Bosnia. He cabled to Washington to urge that innovative step but had no success. The United States was not alone in refusing President Izetbegovic's request for a deployment of peacekeepers to Bosnia. The Bosnian President "asked for, but did not get UN peacekeepers. Vance and the UN leadership in New York took the traditional if puzzling line that peacekeepers are used after a conflict, not before."<sup>25</sup>

The intelligence community was active too. In September 1990 the CIA's lengthy "National Intelligence Estimate" flatly declared that "the Yugoslav experiment failed, that the country will break up,"<sup>26</sup> and that "this is likely to be accompanied by ethnic violence and unrest which could lead to civil war."<sup>27</sup> While it is likely that few officials disagreed with the main thrust of these judgements, the estimate made little impact on the policy-making community in Washington.<sup>28</sup>

For their part the military planners in Washington were also active. They were examining possible interventions in Vukovar and Dubrovnik, because the opportunity to take successful military action was great. This was obvious in the assessment Colonel Karl Lowe, an Army military planner, made:

First of all, the Yugoslav navy was quite small. In comparison to the United States Navy and the power it could bring to the scene in very short order, they couldn't contend with that kind of overwhelming power.

---

<sup>24</sup> Warren Zimmermann, op. cit., p. 6

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>26</sup> Mark Danner, "The US and the Yugoslav Catastrophe," *The New York Review of Books*, January 1998, p. 59.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 59

Similarly, the forces of the Serbian army in the vicinity of Vukovar could not have withstood air attack by the United States, particularly if those air attacks had been very concentrated and very concerted for a number of days so you home in on the command and control apparatus.<sup>29</sup>

In other words, Colonel Lowe urged a forceful demonstration — a show of force — that the United States could have easily performed at that point. That was to “send the Navy into the Adriatic, send ground forces from Central Europe down [toward] southeastern Europe and redispense air forces to simply fly over the area in a very forceful signal that we plan to act if they didn’t back off.”<sup>30</sup> When this creative approach came under consideration, Washington ruled it out by refusing to consider even the mildest threat of using military force.

Yet in comparison with United States policy, European policies seemed feckless. When the Americans cabled the Europeans in an attempt to convince them to consider the Yugoslav crisis at an upcoming CSCE or NATO meeting, the latter’s answers were “shockingly irresponsible.”<sup>31</sup> The answers “ranged from expressions of mild interest on the part of the Austrians and Hungarians, to condescending admonitions not to ‘overreact’ from the English and Germans, to blunt accusations that the Americans were ‘overdramatizing’ the situation from the French.”<sup>32</sup> In short, while the Americans were unwilling to take action to address the Yugoslav crisis, the Europeans had yet to admit that there was a problem.

The European leaders also deepened the ambiguity about the European Community’s policy toward Yugoslavia. On 4 February 1991, the EC foreign ministers called on the Yugoslav authorities to maintain the unity and territorial integrity of the country and to avoid the use of force. The European Parliament, however, raised serious doubts about the EC’s support for Yugoslavia’s unity. Reflecting the political opinions in the member states, on 13 March 1991 it adopted a resolution saying “that the constituent

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

republics and autonomous provinces of Yugoslavia must have the right freely to determine their own future.”<sup>33</sup>

During the 4 April 1991 visit to Belgrade, the Troika representing the presidency of the European Council — the foreign ministers, Jacques Poos of Luxembourg, Gianni De Michelis of Italy, and Hans van der Broek of the Netherlands — tried to overcome the impression created by the European Parliament’s resolution by reaffirming the EC’s support for the preservation of the country’s unity.

However, in May 1991 the community’s attitude changed again. During their visit to Belgrade, the President of the European Council, Jacques Santer, and the President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, “no longer listed the preservation of Yugoslavia’s unity among the conditions for opening negotiations on association, though those conditions could be seen as implicit in a longer and more detailed list of conditions.”<sup>34</sup>

Only two days before Croatia and Slovenia proclaimed their independence did the EC make its intentions clear. On 23 June 1991 the EC foreign ministers agreed “not to acknowledge” unilateral declarations of independence and reaffirmed their refusal of “any contact” with secessionists. Yet the chairman of the European Council added that “the Twelve do not state they will never recognize a Yugoslav Republic wanting to leave the federation but this decision [to secede] ‘must be the result of negotiation and internal agreement.’”<sup>35</sup>

The ambiguous image of the EC’s policy was reinforced by the contradictory signals individual EC members sent. In February 1991, Chancellor Kohl expressed concern about the Yugoslav crisis but he did not say anything about the need to preserve the country’s unity.<sup>36</sup> The chairman of the German Social Democratic Party, Norbert Gansell, even suggested that the EC change its policy toward support for Croatian and Slovenian independence. The Croats must also have felt encouraged in the pursuit of their independence by the warm welcome President Tudjman received from the Italian

---

<sup>33</sup> Saadia Touval, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 412.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 412.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 412.

president and prime minister, as well as from the Pope during his May 1991 visit in Italy. The strongest opposition to Croatian independence came from French Prime Minister Edith Cresson. In her welcoming speech to Yugoslav Prime Minister Markovic on 23 May 1991 Cresson clearly stated that "Yugoslavia cannot be part of Europe unless she remains united."<sup>37</sup>

In view of these hesitant and ambiguous signals, Milosevic could see by 1990 that he was free to ignore America as well as Europe, since no concrete threats, much less action, had accompanied their policy statements so far. When the unity of Yugoslavia was endangered in the late 1980s by Slovenia's secessionist tendencies, he pretended to be the apostle of unity, to preserve a unity that Serbia could dominate. By 1991, when he realized that the Slovene and Croat independence movements as well as his own disruptive actions in the name of unity had dealt a lethal blow to the preservation of Yugoslavia, Milosevic made a new strategic choice: "rather than try, at all costs to preserve the state, as the Yugoslav army wished to do, he would carve a greater Serbia out of it. The rest followed logically: Vukovar, Dubrovnik, Zvornik, Sarajevo."<sup>38</sup>

## **B. A FAILURE TO LEARN**

### **1. What Was the Failure?**

After having failed to prevent the obviously imminent war, it took months until some of the Western powers could first intervene in Bosnia. When the West eventually took action, it did so in a way that revealed a deep misunderstanding of Bosnia's problems. Indeed, "At no point during the Bosnian war have the pronouncements of Western statesmen shown any clear understanding of who made this war happen and why."<sup>39</sup> The West's chief failure so far has been a failure to learn from Bosnia's history. It is a failure to understand that Bosnia has been a distinctive entity where three ethnically identical groups differentiate themselves on the grounds of religious allegiances. It was

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 413.

<sup>38</sup> Roger Cohen, "Peace in His Time," *The New Republic*, March 11, 1996, p. 39.

<sup>39</sup> Noel Malcolm, "Bosnia and the West: A Study in Failure" *The National Interest*, No. 39 (Spring 1995), p. 4.



also a failure to understand that the violence has been largely generated by external factors.

The West had preferred to build its understanding of the Bosnian war on the grounds of "ancient ethnic hatreds." Two theories, one external, and one internal, tried to explain the historical inevitability of the war in Bosnia. The former holds that the break up of Yugoslavia was caused by the collapse of communism.

Only Communism, one was told — this view quickly found favor among United Nations officials in the former Yugoslavia, who, as 'peacekeepers' bound to dealing with all groups impartially, naturally were drawn to this 'plague on all their houses' stance — had kept the nationalist demons at bay. Once the system had collapsed, the revival of ethnic antagonism had been inevitable, even if a more inspired international diplomatic effort or better leaders within the former Yugoslav republics might have mitigated the catastrophic form these clashes had taken.<sup>40</sup>

The latter theory also gives comfort by using a limited number of historical examples of wars and massacres whose superficial analysis supports the same conclusion: the inevitability of the Bosnian war. In fact, some historians have concluded that "in the past Bosnia was not a particularly violent place - at least by the violent standards of European history. The twentieth century was something of a tragic exception, but no more in Bosnia than in Poland, and people do not harbor similarly extreme fantasies about the Polish national character."<sup>41</sup> But in selecting examples from Bosnian history, the West went back only as far as the twentieth century or at most the late nineteenth century. In this way the Westerners failed to grasp the fact that such examples "arose mainly from the most untypical episodes in Balkan history, conflicts introduced or exacerbated by forces (such as the Axis invasion) from outside Yugoslavia itself. For most of the rest of the history of those lands, there are no records of Croats killing Serbs because they were Serbs, or vice versa."<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> David Rieff, *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), p. 74.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

<sup>42</sup> Noel Malcolm, "Bosnia and the West: A Study in Failure," *The National Interest*, No. 39 (Spring 1995), p. 4.

The quasi-general Western acceptance of the two theories resulted in a distorted view that determined a two-track failure so far as the appropriate steps the West should undertake in the Bosnian crisis were concerned. First, such a view made understanding the nature of the Bosnian war impossible.

In the eyes of Western policymakers, this war was not a project engaged in by a set of people with political aims; it was an outbreak of an undifferentiated thing called "violence," which had just sprung up as a symptom of Bosnia's general malaise, here, there everywhere. Clausewitz was out; Freud and Jung, as theorists of death wish and the collective unconscious, were perhaps thought more appropriate. Lacking a political understanding of the origins and the nature of the war, the West responded to it not with politics but with therapy.<sup>43</sup>

It was now clear that the West could no longer objectively see an appropriate way to stop the war. Consequently, politicians looked exclusively at the symptoms and thus managed to ignore the causes.

Second, such a view made partition along ethnic lines a desirable solution. The reasoning was simple: "If violence is the natural product of hatred, and hatred the natural mode of interaction between people who were ethnically different, then the obvious way to stop the violence is to separate the ethnic groups."<sup>44</sup>

In retrospect it appears that only by removing any trace of rationality and political understanding from its analysis of the view on the Bosnian war could the West take such absurd action. "And yet that excision was performed, and performed thoroughly."<sup>45</sup>

## **2. Critical Failures**

Although its policy was based on an acceptance, through ignorance, of the assumption that the war was inevitable, the West comforted itself with the "ancient ethnic hatreds" approach. Four principles were evident in the thinking of politicians in the United States and West European countries when they elaborated that policy. The European governments (led by France and Britain) and the United States government

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

sought to uphold principles they believed would be consistent with their interests in the long run; but the actions they took eventually failed to support these interests.

The first principle was the need for "stability." According to Noel Malcolm, this was "one of the key words in the British Foreign Office lexicon, where it tends to be associated with the doctrine that every region needs one strong local power to keep it in order."<sup>46</sup> Although it was never said that Serbia ought to be that dominant power in the Balkans, this principle was nevertheless obvious in the eagerness of the West European governments, especially London, to accept the Serb conquest in Bosnia as a *fait accompli*.

The second principle stemmed from the desire to avoid setting precedents for other parts of the ex-communist world. This desire had been the chief force behind the West's determination to preserve Yugoslavia's unity in June 1991. It had been inspired by the fear of a sudden breakup of the Soviet Union, but the Soviet Union broke up anyway. "Since that moment, the argument about precedent setting has ceased to be a justification for Western policy and has become a condemnation of it."<sup>47</sup>

Third, especially in France and Britain, the predominant importance attached to maintaining good relations with the current regime in Russia influenced the handling of the Bosnian crisis. Valuing the "new era of East-West cooperation" that had begun in 1990-1991, the Western powers were reluctant to do anything that would have challenged good relations with Russia and thus neglected the Bosnians. "Since the Russians tended to support the Serbs, the inevitable effect of subordinating our Bosnian policy to the desire not to offend Russia was to make that policy more pro-Serb."<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the idea that Russia is the natural ally of Serbia has a shaky historical foundation. The traditional Russian bridgehead in the Balkans has been Bulgaria rather than Serbia, as shown by the 1877 war. After the Second World War relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union were cold for nearly fifty years.<sup>49</sup>

The fourth factor was the role the United States had to play in advancing the Bosnian Muslims' interests against the European "concern that the establishment of a

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

Muslim state in the former Yugoslavia would create a base for the spread of Muslim immigrants and Islamic fundamentalism.”<sup>50</sup> The fact that important Islamic allies of the United States such as Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia were watching closely for any sign of potential American abandonment of the Muslim-led Bosnian government reinforced the U.S. inclination to back Alja Izetbegovic more resolutely than any West European country. Therefore, despite its being what Huntington calls “a noncivilizational anomaly in the otherwise universal pattern of kin backing kin,”<sup>51</sup> the American decision appears to have been pragmatic. It may have limited the involvement of Islamic countries in the Bosnian war.

The Westerners failed to apply the first three principles correctly and thus failed to achieve their goals. In short, lacking objectives other than vague guiding principles, the West failed to define an appropriate policy toward the Bosnian crisis. This was obvious in three consecutive steps taken by Western governments.

First, for years, the West failed to distinguish clearly the primary warring parties in the Bosnian conflict. Instead, both Europe and America relied on “doctrine of equivalence.” The “ancient ethnic hatreds” thesis conveniently rendered all parties to the war equivalent. Attackers and defenders were assigned the same status. Since the Muslims’ hatred could be no more justified than the Serbs’ or the Croats’ hatred, the West conducted its activities “on the principle that everyone was more or less equally guilty.”<sup>52</sup>

Furthermore, until March 1994 the West failed to group on the same side the two warring parties that regarded the Serbs as a common enemy. The Croat-Muslim split had given the Serbs an opportunity to carve up Bosnia by political means backed with the threat of armed force. The Bosnian Croats not only openly fought the Muslims but they also responded to and, to some extent, imitated the Serb initiatives. After the Bosnian Serbs had set up their “Autonomous Regions” in May 1991 and a “parliament” in October 1991, the Croat counterpart proclaimed its “Croatian Community of Herceg-Bosna” in

---

<sup>50</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, op. cit., p. 271.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 281.

<sup>52</sup> Noel Malcolm, “Bosnia and the West: A Study in Failure,” *The National Interest*, No. 39 (Spring 1995), p. 6.

July 1992. When the SDS (Bosnian Serbs' Party) issued a map proposing the national "cantonization" of Bosnia (with roughly 70 per cent of the territory as Serb cantons) in December 1991, the HDZ (Bosnian Croats' Party) replied not long afterwards with a map of its own (with roughly 30 per cent of the territory as Croat cantons).<sup>53</sup> Indeed, Presidents Milosevic and Tudjman met twice, in March 1991 and February 1992, to discuss the partition of Bosnia between Serbia and Croatia. This Serb-Croat conspiracy came to an abrupt end in March 1994, when, under significant American and German pressure, the Croats and the Muslims signed the agreement to create the Muslim-Croat Federation.

Second, for years, the West failed to stop its unintended but crucial support to the Serbs' cause in Bosnia by maintaining in place an ill-conceived arms embargo. On 25 September 1991, when Bosnia was still part of the Yugoslav federation, UNSCR 713 introduced an arms embargo against the whole of Yugoslavia. In April 1992, however, Bosnia received formal recognition as an independent state, and in May 1992 it was admitted as a full member to the UN. Yet the embargo remained in place, violating Bosnia's legitimate right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter. It was certainly applied to Serbia too, but Serbia and its forces in Bosnia had "the stockpiles of the fourth largest army in Europe."<sup>54</sup> Consequently, far from "reducing the quantity of fighting," the embargo "intervened decisively, entrenching the massive military superiority of the force which launched the original attack on Bosnia in April 1992."<sup>55</sup>

The Europeans and the Americans held different opinions on this matter. The Americans had been rhetorically committed to the idea that the Bosnian government should be given a chance to fight back; and in late 1994, they decided that they would no longer enforce the embargo. For their part, "the Europeans denied that any aggression had even taken place, and spoke instead of a civil war in Bosnia," and steadfastly opposed lifting the arms embargo.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), p. 232.

<sup>54</sup> Noel Malcolm, "Bosnia and the West: A Study in Failure," *The National Interest*, No. 39 (Spring 1995), p. 7.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>56</sup> David Rieff, *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), p. 27.

Third, the West failed to oppose the *de facto* partition of Bosnia. Indeed, the West constantly guided its policy according to what it called "the facts on the ground,"<sup>57</sup> a phrase employed to describe the conditions which the outside world was powerless or unwilling to alter. This attitude was apparent in the evolution of the peace plans the interested external powers elaborated. The Vance-Owen, Owen-Stoltenberg and "Contact Group" plans mirrored the percentages of Bosnian territory each of the three warring parties had acquired by military means. The plans explicitly reflected and endorsed the "front lines" of the Serb military conquests.

Furthermore, the relationship between Western policies and military analyses was definitely ambiguous. "It is hard, for example, to think of a single speech by any British, American, or European politician which has discussed Serbian war aims at any length, or even used the term 'war aims' at all."<sup>58</sup> This critical failure helps to explain the poor coordination of the Europeans and the Americans with respect to the UN and NATO interventions in the Bosnian war. NATO was more inclined to follow the generals and admirals that "ached to be cut loose and allowed to inflict damage on the enemy. But the UN . . . insisted that almost all potential bombing was a political act that had to be approved by the civilian in charge of the U.N. operation."<sup>59</sup> Additionally, to "complicate matters, both the NATO council and the Security Council were divided between the pro-bombers led by the United States and the anti-bombers led by Britain and France."<sup>60</sup> The lack of agreement resulted in ambiguity and little efficiency in the West's use of the strong military muscle it had at its disposal. Until August 1995 the UN successfully prevented NATO from doing what it was prepared to do: to fight. As a consequence of the perpetual mutual blocking, the UN and NATO failed to perform three critical tasks.

First, NATO and the UN failed to enforce the "no-fly zone" the Security Council had imposed in October 1992. A UNSCR in May 1993 authorized NATO to shoot down any plane or helicopter flying over Bosnia without UN clearance, but NATO airplanes could not fire upon the offending aircraft without prior UN approval. NATO jets flew

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> Stanley Meisler, *United Nations: The First Fifty Years* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), p. 324.

over Bosnia every day; but with one exception, when four Serb jets were shot down, they did little else. By late March 1995, the UN had reported 4,217 violations by Serb, Muslim, and Croat helicopters and planes in the two and a half years since the imposition of the no-fly zone.<sup>61</sup> Most of the violations involved non-combat airplanes and helicopters carrying soldiers and civilians within Bosnia, and the UN insisted that it would be wrong to shoot down most of these aircraft.

Second, the UN failed to make the "safe areas" safe. The "safe areas" resolution generated many of the outcomes feared most by UN workers in the field. The "safe areas" became some of the unsafe places in Bosnia, prey to disease and dependent on UN food aid and on Serb and Croat tolerance for such food deliveries. "Moreover, by mid-October, even the limited objective of protecting the 'safe areas' had overstretched the existing UNPROFOR forces, while attacks on UN aid convoys were becoming increasingly frequent."<sup>62</sup> Perhaps these "safe areas" had helped to prevent a massacre in 1993, but they increasingly became zones of conflict.

For the UN troops, the "safe areas" functioned as reservations where Serbs could easily seize Western hostages. This situation made Western governments reluctant to adopt any policies that might invite the Serbs to retaliate against vulnerable Western troops. "Western leaders, in christening these enclaves 'safe,' had failed to muster the will or the resources to defend them. Designating the 'safe areas' two years before had been a political, not a military act."<sup>63</sup> The politicians had done this to gratify people in the West, particularly the Americans, who applauded what deceptively appeared to be an expression of strong will. The politicians had taken little time, however, to assess whether the "safe areas" were militarily defensible.

Third, the UN and NATO failed to use the airpower they had at hand effectively. The basic principles of how the air strikes would be delivered were fundamentally ill-conceived. The airpower could not be used for the defense of the "safe areas" unless the

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 321.

<sup>62</sup> Jolene Kay Jesse, *Pew Case Studies in International Affairs*. Case 471: "Humanitarian Aid in the Midst of Conflict: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the Former Yugoslavia" (Washington D.C.: Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, 1996), p. 15.

UN personnel within the "safe areas" came under attack. Then, according to the cumbersome "dual key" principle, both the UN and NATO leaders had the power to block any proposed air attack. Consequently, when used on a few occasions and then only for timid "pinprick" attacks, the air strikes did little more than "to drop a bomb or two on some isolated mortar or tank."<sup>64</sup>

However, the Serbs once again found a way to counter Western actions. They simply took hundreds of UN peacekeepers hostage. Since the UN peacekeepers were spread throughout Bosnia, often in small groups as observers or humanitarian convoy escorts, it was not difficult to capture and detain them. The Serb "hostage-taking" strategy worked well: the air strikes stopped. According to Stanley Meisler, "neither UN officials nor the governments supplying troops wanted to goad the Serbs into killing their hostages. NATO had finally brought airpower to the war in Bosnia, but the Serbs had brushed it aside."<sup>65</sup> The West eventually took the appropriate action, but not until August 1995.

Furthermore, there was nothing in the Western strategy capable of stopping the Serbian "ethnic cleansing" strategy. At local level, Serbs went "first to terrify the local Muslims into flight, and secondly to radicalize the local Serb population, recruiting some of its young men into this glamorous new occupation, in order to establish Serbian control"<sup>66</sup> on the ground. For these two purposes a good number of random killings in cold blood was enough. But the psychology of terror introduced by the Serb paramilitary was not enough. "An equally important part of the psychological operation was to convince the local Serbs that they had to 'defend' themselves against their Muslim neighbors. The ground had been prepared, of course, by the broadcast of Radio Television Belgrade, warning Serbs of Ustasa pogroms and fundamentalist jihads."<sup>67</sup> No one in the UN, NATO, or any other Western organization could imagine how to stop that.

---

<sup>63</sup> Mark Danner, "Bosnia: Breaking the Machine," *The New York Review of Books*, February 19, 1998, p. 44.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>65</sup> Stanley Meisler, op. cit., p. 327.

<sup>66</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), p. 236.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 237.



Yet the ethnic cleansing pursued by the Serbs eventually proved to be an unwise strategic choice. According to Mark Danner, "instead of crushing the thoroughly unprepared and defenseless Bosnian government, as the world's leaders had clearly expected they would, the Serbs, in order to secure their ideological goal of ethnic cleansing, had left aside their two prime strategic tasks: conquering the enclaves — several of which, including Srebrenica, stood near Serbia's border and thus had to be taken in order to secure 'Greater Serbia' — and forcing the Bosnian leaders to sue for peace."<sup>68</sup> The ethnic cleansing produced a fatal delay and forced the reluctant Western leaders to respond. By the time they met on Mount Jahorina in the spring of 1995 the Serb politicians and officers must have been able to see the flaws in their strategy. Triumphant in victory three years earlier, the Serbs had assumed that it would only be a matter of time before they would get around to dealing with the enclaves and eliminating the Bosnian embryonic state. But they had been wrong.

### 3. Layered Analysis

The contradictory positions among the great European powers alone would have perhaps been enough to doom Bosnia. The British were in favor of partition. The French were actively pro-Serb, at least until President François Mitterrand left office in May 1995. The Germans had endorsed the independence of Slovenia and Croatia, but then made a grave mistake by promptly withdrawing from any serious diplomatic, let alone military, involvement.

The Europeans earned harsh criticisms. As David Rieff has noted, "In the early stages of the Yugoslav collapse, Jacques Poos, the foreign minister of Luxembourg, speaking in the name of the European Union, boasted that it was 'the hour of Europe.' He insisted that the Americans were not needed. And the Bush administration. . . seized on the opportunity that Europeans had so thoughtfully provided."<sup>69</sup> When they eventually intervened, the Europeans did so on the basis of an erroneous understanding of the war and what should be done about it. As a matter of principle, Mark Danner has observed,

---

<sup>68</sup> Mark Danner, "Bosnia: Breaking the Machine," *The New York Review of Books*, February 19, 1998, p. 42.

<sup>69</sup> David Rieff, "Almost Justice," *The New Republic*, July 6, 1998, p. 30.

"limited interventions may help end a war if the intervenor takes sides and tilts the balance in a way that allows one side to win. Impartial intervention may end a war if the outside power takes complete control of the situation and imposes a peace settlement that all respect. The first type of intervention is limited but not impartial, the second is impartial but not limited. The Europeans tried to carry out both a limited and an impartial intervention, and it didn't work."<sup>70</sup>

For the first eighteen months of the Yugoslav war, President Bush and his advisors had maintained a disciplined standoff-ishness, which they stubbornly held even during the uproar following televised pictures of concentration camps. The Bush administration imparted no false hopes to the embattled Bosnians. The Clinton administration nourished such false hopes, however, in both foreign and domestic forums. In his electoral campaign the then-governor of Arkansas proclaimed that his administration would act to end the killing and that America would not be a party to agreements that rewarded ethnic cleansing and Serb military gains. These words proved politically potent, but "the fact was that when it came to Bosnia Clinton had no policy."<sup>71</sup> For years, "however sincerely [Anthony] Lake and many other members of the campaign, notably Al Gore and Madeleine Albright, agreed with the sentiments these words expressed,"<sup>72</sup> the Clinton administration's actions would betray its statements regarding Bosnia.

In 1993 and 1994, American policy toward Bosnia amounted to little more than criticizing the conduct of the UN peacekeeping effort and stymieing the various peace-plans that Vance and Owen, and later the Norwegian politician Stoltenberg were proposing. Two factors finally provoked the Clinton administration to get involved in Bosnia - domestic politics and the threat to NATO's survival. With a presidential election at hand, Clinton was about to lose control of foreign policy on a fundamental issue. The Senate threatened to take Bosnia policy away from the White House by voting for Robert Dole's bill to lift the arms embargo on Bosnia. The administration knew it now had to regain the initiative.

---

<sup>70</sup> Mark Danner, "Bosnia: The Great Betrayal," *The New York Review of Books*, March 26, 1998, p. 43.

<sup>71</sup> Mark Danner, "Slouching Toward Dayton," *The New York Review of Books*, April 23, 1998, p. 62.

But the reason for the intervention may also be tracked to "the sudden, last-minute discovery of a technicality in the American military commitment to NATO."<sup>73</sup> To the amazement of President Clinton, who believed he had publicly vowed to support with American troops a withdrawal of the 25,000 UN peacekeepers from Bosnia, the United States was committed to this action because of something called OpPlan 40-104 — "a highly classified document of 1,500 pages that covered, Holbrooke writes, 'every aspect of NATO's role in supporting a UN withdrawal, from bridge building to body bags.'"<sup>74</sup> Clinton had never approved such a NATO plan or been briefed on it. Yet the plan had been formally approved under NATO procedures by being approved by the North Atlantic Council in Brussels, which includes representatives from all the alliance countries including the United States. It had thus turned out that the withdrawal of the British and French troops from Bosnia would in any case involve American troops, whether Clinton or the Joint Chiefs of Staff favored such action or not.

Additionally, the reasons for the American military participation in the intervention in Bosnia might be related to the changes in French policy. France's determination to withdraw its troops from Bosnia was much stronger by May 1995, when President Chirac demanded that the West either strengthen its effort to punish the Bosnian Serbs or withdraw. In effect, Chirac presented the Clinton administration with an ultimatum. As Holbrooke comments, Chirac "put the Administration in a tight bind, but one that was important in forcing us to start dealing with the reality — that one way or another, the United States could no longer stay uninvolved."<sup>75</sup> The Clinton administration would eventually do the right thing, but its intervention in Bosnia came too late. "The United States did not prevent a genocide, it prevented the completion of a genocide."<sup>76</sup>

Yet neither the Americans nor the Europeans were alone in their culpability. The UN personnel as well as the EC negotiators have their fair share too. For most of the time, they showed no understanding of the war in Bosnia, and they perceived the negotiations as fruitless and frustrating.

---

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>73</sup> David Rieff, "Almost Justice," *The New Republic*, July 6, 1998, p. 32.

<sup>74</sup> Mark Danner, "Slouching Toward Dayton," *The New York Review*, April 23, 1998, p. 60.

<sup>75</sup> David Rieff, "Almost Justice," *The New Republic*, July 6, 1998, p. 36.

Peter Carrington, the first EC negotiator, declared "that he had never encountered such terrible liars in his life as the people of the Balkans."<sup>77</sup> Boutros Boutros-Ghali "was quick to admonish the people of the city [Sarajevo] to stop complaining so much: there were ten places he could name whose citizens were worse off than they were."<sup>78</sup> Owen had been on the bellicose side "until he became involved, at which point he began denouncing virtually anyone who called for the use of force against the Serbs as a 'lap-top bombardier.' Vance was not pro-Serb . . . but he was certainly a plague-on-all-their-houses man from the beginning of his tenure at the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia. Stoltenberg revealed his views in an infamous speech before the European Parliament in Strasbourg, in which he declared that the Bosnian Muslims were in reality Serbs! And it was an article of faith among the UN officials . . . that Muslims were just as bad as their enemies. If they had committed fewer crimes, UN officials constantly insinuated, it was because they had the least means."<sup>79</sup>

Consequently, the UN officials tried to stay impartial. But in Bosnia to be impartial did not mean to be fair. Moreover, sometimes such impartiality could "be positively grotesque, as when Yasushi Akashi, the Secretary General's Special Envoy, left a meeting in Pale and declared to the press that he believed Radovan Karadzic to be 'a man of peace,' boasting of the 'friendship' that had developed between them."<sup>80</sup> The complicity between such negotiators and the Serbs appears obvious in retrospect. It is therefore not surprising that the peace-plans they advanced endorsed the Serb military conquests.

Furthermore, the UN officials actively blocked military actions that NATO was ready to undertake to enforce the UN Security Council resolutions regarding the "no-fly zone," the protection of the "safe areas," and the use of air strikes when the Serbs defied the UN resolutions. The most notable UN official in this category was perhaps Akashi, who compiled a long record of blocking NATO air strikes. He allowed the Serbs to slide

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., pp. 32-33.

<sup>80</sup> David Rieff, *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), p. 166.

over the deadline of an ultimatum that required the withdrawal of the heavy artillery pieces from the area around Sarajevo. Then for over four hours he delayed the approval for an air strike in support of a French battalion in Bihac trying to halt a Serb tank and Serb artillery pieces aiming at them. When the approval finally arrived, it was too late to find the Serb weapons for the simple reason that the Serbs had withdrawn them. The air strike was canceled since the NATO raid had been approved against the offending weapons and no others. NATO could not bomb the Serb artillery pieces defying another UN ultimatum around the enclave of Goradze in April 1994 because Akashi vetoed the proposal.

Akashi's legendary patience definitely grated on the nerves of both those who felt he "made NATO look like a toothless tiger"<sup>81</sup> and those who had seen far too much of the way Karadzic waged war. Akashi's decreasing popularity was perhaps best captured by the nicknames the UN field officers and journalists came up with for him: "the Mitsubishi Cetnik" and "the Senior Serb Liaison Officer."<sup>82</sup> Also, for many who had come to know and distrust Akashi, he "was a two-faced apologist for the Serbs, trying with his words to forestall a firmer stand on the part of the NATO powers."<sup>83</sup> But in fact he was simply "a man of the UN" engaged in Bosnian affairs only in a narrowly constrained professional way. "Akashi wasn't *even* pro-Serb."<sup>84</sup>

The use, or rather the misuse, of military forces mirrored the ambiguity and lack of clear political goals of Western diplomacy. Consequently, many senior officers, including the commander of the UN forces in Bosnia, Lieutenant General Sir Michael Rose, "whose mantra about not crossing 'the Mogadishu line'<sup>85</sup> separating neutral peacekeeping from involvement in a war will be remembered as one of the more fatuous refrains of the Balkan tragedy,"<sup>86</sup> seemed to share the politicians' confusion and miscomprehension of the Bosnian war. General Rose was a good match for the policy

---

<sup>81</sup> Stanley Meisler, *op. cit.*, pp. 325-326.

<sup>82</sup> David Rieff, *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), p. 166.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247; emphasis in the original.

<sup>85</sup> The "Mogadishu line" means that the UN should not exceed the limits of a peace keeping mandate and become a combatant, as it did in Somalia, in October 1993.

Akashi and Owen adopted without understanding that neutrality in the Bosnian war signified the appeasement of the Serbs. Yet, besides being limited by the UN mandate, there was little someone like General Rose could have done to overcome the general opposition to seeking a military solution that was quasi-generally shared until mid-August 1995.

Lieutenant General Rupert Smith, who succeeded General Rose, eventually crossed the Mogadishu line in 1995; but success did not come easily. It could not be achieved until the politicians changed their attitude about how the Bosnian war was to be ended. Committed to making the full use of the scope for action the UN resolutions gave the military in Bosnia, Smith elaborated a two-phase strategy and presented it to all the UN dignitaries or allied officials that passed through Sarajevo.

According to General Smith's "thesis," the international community must allow him to "bomb targets other than 'smoking guns' and 'escalate to success,' or, if they were not prepared to do so, 'the machine would break.' In the latter case, air power would lose its deterrent effect on the Serbs and, if the international community wanted UNPROFOR to continue to function, it would be forced to create another, better machine with a broader range of capabilities and more secure bases for the UN troops in Bosnia."<sup>87</sup>

The "escalating to success" phase required the UN to authorize NATO to launch air strikes and to respond with even more air strikes after the Serbs had again seized UN hostages or make the UN personnel less vulnerable by greatly reducing their presence in places such as the "safe areas." Further hostage-taking or a withdrawal in fear of hostage-taking would have demonstrated that the machinery to deal with the Bosnian war the external powers had organized and operated was "broken." It was then the right time for General Smith and his superior, General Janvier, to propose another approach to the Western leaders another indisputably workable machine.

General Smith began to "escalate to success" on 25 May 1995 when he sent NATO airplanes to attack Serb positions. Simultaneously General Janvier presented the UN Security Council in New York the formal alternative of the "escalating to success

---

<sup>86</sup> Roger Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>87</sup> Mark Danner, "Bosnia: Breaking the Machine," *The New York Review of Books*, February 19, 1998, p. 44.

strategy," called "measures to enhance UNPROFOR's effectiveness and security." If accepted, this proposal would have allowed the UN to withdraw its personnel from the "safe areas" and leave just the number of military observers necessary to call for air strikes when the "safe areas" were violated. This strategy could "counteract the main political weakness affecting the resolve of governments to use force: the vulnerability of UNPROFOR to hostage taking by the Bosnian Serbs."<sup>88</sup>

But the proposed strategy was angrily rejected. The American ambassador, Madeleine Albright, declared it "flatly and completely wrong."<sup>89</sup> In doing so she simply exposed the deep contradiction of the U.S. policy that could not give up the "safe areas" fiction: "if their creation had been politically inspired, they had now become a symbol that could be made real only through an act of political courage."<sup>90</sup> The fiction blindly refused to acknowledge that the withdrawal of UNPROFOR troops had become the only politically workable way to make an "effective and robust action" possible. Consequently, on 29 May 1995, "General Smith received his answer from Janvier, in the form of directive 2/95: The execution of the mandate is secondary to the security of UN personnel."<sup>91</sup>

The Mogadishu line was eventually crossed in September-October 1995, but only after President Clinton had been forced to take action and the European leaders had significantly changed their approach toward intervention in Bosnia. "The cumbersome UN-NATO 'dual key' system of decision-making had been streamlined, giving more direct authority to NATO commanders; the [European] Reaction Force had deployed its artillery on Mount Igman, outside Sarajevo; and the last group of British soldiers had just been withdrawn from Goradze, thus depriving the Serbs of their easiest source of potential hostages."<sup>92</sup> General Smith's strategy had in this way been eventually applied. NATO pilots could now destroy Serb antiaircraft batteries, radar sites, ammunition depots, command bunkers, and bridges without fear of any hostage-taking.

---

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>92</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), p. 266.

The Croats and the Bosnian Muslims also benefited from the Western use of General Smith's strategy. "Indeed, NATO planes had in effect become the Croatian and Bosnian air force, ensuring that they would succeed,"<sup>93</sup> when they combined their attacks in northwest Bosnia and thus changed the balance of power. By the end of September 1995, the Serbs held only as much territory as had been envisaged in the Contact Group.

The Bosnian Serbs had changed their flawed "ethnic cleansing" strategy in 1995. With events running against them, they returned to their original war aims. "The first goal was to create hardship in Sarajevo in a bid to convince Muslim leaders that further resistance was futile; the second was to overrun the Srebrenica, Zepa, Goradze and Bihac safe areas in order to make possible the eventual merger the Serb land in Bosnia with Serbia."<sup>94</sup> If the Bosnian Serbs had done that one year earlier, they might have been successful, but by the summer of 1995 it was too late, politically and militarily.

By mid-1995 the Western leaders had changed their approach toward Bosnia, and Milosevic had also understood that the Bosnian Serbs could not win the war. By 1995 he was eager to end the war, but the Bosnian Serb leaders in Pale in their arrogance presumed to ignore his directives. The Bosnian Serbs had already done so in May 1994 when Radovan Karadzic rejected the first "Contact Group" peace plan, even though Milosevic had found satisfactory the 51/49 Federation/Serb ratio in the division of the Bosnian territory. American diplomacy had pushed the Bosnian Muslims and Croats into a Federation. Iranian weapons flowed to the Bosnians through Zagreb. Retired American generals advised the much-strengthened Croatian army, which was obvious in this army's operations in September-October 1995. These developments sufficed to make Milosevic understand that "whatever his pretensions to have fathered 'Greater Serbia' he would not risk his power by moving to rescue his erstwhile proteges in Pale."<sup>95</sup>

Milosevic's decision to achieve peace in Bosnia by cooperating with the West and betraying the Bosnian Serbs was apparent in four decisions. First, to signal displeasure with Karadzic's rejection of the "Contact Group" peace plan in May 1994, he limited the

---

<sup>93</sup> Mark Danner, "'Operation Storm,'" *The New York Review of Books*, October 22, 1998, p. 78.

<sup>94</sup> Mark Danner, "Bosnia: Breaking the Machine," *The New York Review of Books*, February 19, 1998, p. 44.

<sup>95</sup> Mark Danner, "Bosnia: The Great Betrayal," *The New York Review of Books*, March 26, 1998, p. 42.



supplies of weapons and fuel that once flowed freely across the Drina. Consequently, each day the Bosnian Serbs grew weaker and their Croat and Muslim enemies stronger.

Second, Milosevic sat on his hands while the Croats seized Slavonia in May 1995 and the entire Krajina region in August 1995. In both cases the Serb population in the conquered areas retreated to Bosnia, apparently following the instructions of their own local political leaders.

Third, Milosevic sat on his hands once again when the Bosnian Muslims and Croats reduced the Serb-conquered territory in Bosnia from 70 to roughly 49 per cent in mid-September 1995.

Fourth, Milosevic imposed peace on the Bosnian Serbs. At Dayton, he ignored the Bosnian Serb members of his delegation. "For the Americans they were invisible; for Milosevic, they were to know only what he chose to tell them about what he had negotiated on their behalf. Indeed, only minutes before the signing ceremony, Milosevic told the Bosnian Serbs that he had given up the Serb demand for Sarajevo."<sup>96</sup>

The United States dealt with Milosevic and thus by-passed the Bosnian Serbs at Dayton. Perhaps this was the most pragmatic way to reach an earlier end to the war. The Americans were now in effect abandoning the liberal ideals announced by Clinton during the 1992 electoral campaign. Therefore, Dayton could not represent anything more than an accord brilliantly negotiated at the expense of justice.

## **C. A FAILURE TO ADAPT**

### **1. What Was the Failure?**

According to Charles Boyd, "It is often stated, incorrectly, that the Dayton Accord stopped the fighting in Bosnia. What it did, with the aid of 60,000 U.S. and coalition troops, was to freeze in place an uneasy cease-fire and to prevent a resumption of hostilities."<sup>97</sup> The West — led by the United States — simply twisted the arms of the

---

<sup>96</sup> Warren Bass, "The Triage of Dayton," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 77 No. 5 (September/October 1998), p. 102.

<sup>97</sup> Charles G. Boyd, "Making Bosnia Work," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 77 No.1 (January/February 1998), p. 43.

warring parties, with little regard for the concerns of the Bosnian Serbs, and concluded a peace that vindicated no one. In achieving the Dayton Accord, the interested external parties had chosen to support an imposed peace instead of pursuing justice, which would have been more costly. The West thus failed to bring Bosnia an enduring peace.

In practical terms, the United States had stood before two roads. One of those roads, the road around Banja Luka, would maintain the Republika Srpska. This was the solution that had been agreed by the "Contact Group" — the United States, Britain, France, Germany, and Russia. This road could well bring peace but too little justice. The other solution was "the conquest of Banja Luka and with it the destruction of Republika Srpska — the destruction of General Mladic, Radovan Karadzic, and other sinister ideologists of ethnic cleansing — and the destruction of some sort of integral Bosnia. Shattered as it was by NATO bombs, ignored by its godfather, Slobodan Milosevic of Yugoslavia, the Serb Republic of Bosnia could not survive the loss of its largest city."<sup>98</sup> The latter solution would have brought Bosnia much more vindication but it would have also cost more and placed a heavier burden of responsibility on America in its attempt to build the new Bosnian state. The United States chose the former road.

Consequently, the fulfillment of several crucial conditions for an enduring peace was postponed indefinitely. While the military aspects of the Dayton Accord have so far been successfully implemented, partly because the IFOR and SFOR efforts have been robust and partly because the separation mission reflects the desires of the antagonists themselves, the civilian tasks are still on "stand-by mode."

Moreover, the political and legal aspects of the Dayton Accord strongly pointed toward *de facto* partition, which might eventually lead to the secession of the Republika Srpska and war if the Federation contested the secession. The UN, NATO, other European organizations, and the United States in particular failed to secure success when, in September-October 1995, it seemed to many observers to be there for the taking. But the West intervened to protect the Bosnian Serbs from military defeat when this was imminent.

---

<sup>98</sup> Mark Danner, "'Operation Storm,'" *The New York Review of Books*, October 22, 1998, p. 79.

## 2. Critical Failures

When such an opportunity arose in 1995, the West chose to deal with Milosevic instead of defeating him and his proteges in Pale. The West failed to do what might have been reasonably expected of it. As Noel Malcolm pointed out, "It was a strange outcome to a conflict which had come so close, with the rapid collapse of Serb forces in north-western Bosnia in September and October 1995, to being resolved by straightforward military means."<sup>99</sup>

After the Croatian and Bosnian government forces' successful Operation Storm had made dramatic gains in north-western Bosnia by taking Vakuf, Jaice, Sanski Most, and Priedjor and was pressing toward Banja Luka, the British and American governments pressured Croatia to halt the campaign.<sup>100</sup> The U.S.-British initiative did not conform to any military logic. It merely deprived the interested external powers and Bosnia itself of a clear military solution to the war — the defeat of the Serb forces — that had never been closer before. But a clear military solution on the ground "was not envisaged by the American-led diplomatic initiative, which turned instead to a reworking of the previous 'Contact Group' plan."<sup>101</sup>

Consequently, by mid-September 1995, Washington officials were both privately and publicly pressing for the Croats and the Bosnian Muslims to stop their offensive in northwest Bosnia. Ambassador Galbraith delivered a formal message to the Croat defense minister urging the Croats to stop that offensive.<sup>102</sup> According to Mark Danner's account, Galbraith visited President Tudjman and handed him Washington's official message shortly before the Croats would surge into Krajina. "We are concerned, the diplomatic note said in part, that you are preparing for an offensive in sector south and north."<sup>103</sup> As Noel Malcolm observed,

Stranger still was the fact that it was the Americans who had halted that military process and imposed quasi-partition instead, having spent the

---

<sup>99</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), pp. 270-271.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

<sup>102</sup> Mark Danner, "Operation Storm," *The New York Review of Books*, October 22, 1998, p. 78.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

previous three years criticizing European governments for their pursuit of diplomatic solutions derived from very similar principles. In the end, it seemed that American policy had succumbed to the false analysis which had so poisoned European policy since the start of the war — an analysis which saw 'ancient ethnic hatreds' as the origin of the conflict, and therefore favored some kind of ethnic separation as a solution.<sup>104</sup>

### 3. Layered Analysis

The Croat-Bosnian offensive proved to be a revealing indicator of perceptions at the top echelons of the American government. It revealed that "Most officials saw these military thrusts as simply another chapter in the dreary story of fighting and bloodshed in the region. They felt that the duty of our diplomacy was to put a stop to the fighting, regardless of what was happening on the ground."

Robert D. Kaplan's book *Balkan Ghosts* had reportedly "profoundly shaped the President's thinking on the limitations of intervention in a part of the world where ethnic feuds have deep roots."<sup>105</sup> The message that President Clinton "took from the book was that these people had been killing each other for 10 centuries,"<sup>106</sup> and naturally it looked as if there was little chance that one could ever do anything to stop such cycles of killing. Indeed, Clinton took action on Bosnia only under serious constraints and against the inclinations of some of his closest advisors on security matters.

U.S. military and intelligence officials reportedly also opposed the continuation of Operation Storm from the very beginning. With the blessing of the State Department the American military had instructed Croat officers at the Petar Zrinski Military Academy in a "Democracy Transition Program" since 1994. Consequently many observers noted that Tudjman's Operation Storm seemed to "bear striking resemblance to current American doctrine, in particular the set of tactics known as AirLand Battle 2000."<sup>107</sup> But by September 1995, the U.S. military and the CIA opposed any continuation of the Croat offensive. The Americans reportedly feared and predicted that the pursuit of the Croat

---

<sup>104</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), p. 271.

<sup>105</sup> Michael T. Kaufman, "The Dangers of Letting a President Read," *New York Times*, May 22, 1999.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Mark Danner, "'Operation Storm,'" *The New York Review of Books*, October 22, 1998, p. 74.

offensive would draw in the regular Serb army of Slobodan Milosevic and thus greatly widen the war.

According to Mark Danner, only a few other officials, such as Richard Holbrooke and Ambassador Robert Frasure, had a different view. Their view was based on a *Realpolitik* approach. They believed that "the success of the Croatian offensive was a classic illustration of the fact that the shape of the diplomatic landscape will usually reflect the balance of forces on the ground."<sup>108</sup> If this was the preferred approach and the desired outcome was a 51/49 division of the territory between the Federation and the Bosnian Serbs, then the course of action would follow logically. Since the Bosnian Serbs held 70 per cent of the territory before the Croat invasion in Krajina, "then some means had to be found to reduce their holdings"<sup>109</sup> to the 51/49 per cent ratio of the then-current "Contact Group" formula before the negotiations could have any chance to work.

In other words, the Croat offensive was useful as long as the gains it added to the Federation did not exceed the 51 per cent limit. Consequently, even Holbrooke failed to grasp the golden opportunity available in September-October 1995. When the Croat-Muslim offensive gave the Federation control over roughly 51 per cent of the Bosnian territory, Holbrooke, "as talented a diplomat as the U.S. has, pushed for what his president had demanded, and what his instincts required: the 'quick diplomatic solution.'"<sup>110</sup>

Furthermore, negotiations of some sort between Ambassador Frasure and Milosevic apparently took place in May 1995. As Jan Honig and Norbert Both put it in their book, *Srebrenica: Record of a War Crime*, no matter how short-lived the deal then concluded was, the U.S. decision to negotiate intensively with Milosevic, "the traditional villain of the Balkan piece, indicated that in the Clinton administration the wish to end the war was gaining the upper hand over the wish to punish the Serb aggressors."<sup>111</sup>

The consensus at the top in U.S. decision-making circles was now complete. Since they all feared that such actions would only bring a wider war, the U.S. President

---

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

and his security advisors, the Congress, the diplomats, the intelligence community, and the military were all half-hearted when confronted with these questions: whether to encourage the Croats to retake Krajina and the Croats and the Muslims to retake the Serb conquests in Bosnia, and whether to use NATO airpower to attack the Serbs.

The American fears pointed again and again toward Vietnam. Because of the October 1993 debacle in Somalia, some observers referred to a "Vietmalia effect." According to Richard Holbrooke, U.S. officials, especially those in the military and intelligence agencies, refused to acknowledge that

Bosnia was different, and so were our objectives. While we had to learn from Vietnam, we could not be imprisoned by it. Bosnia was not Vietnam, the Bosnian Serbs were not the Vietcong, and Belgrade was not Hanoi. The Bosnian Serbs, poorly trained bullies and criminals, would not stand up to . . . air strikes the way the seasoned and indoctrinated Vietcong and North Vietnamese had. And, as we had seen in the Krajina, Belgrade was not going to back the Bosnian Serbs up the way Hanoi had backed the Vietcong.<sup>112</sup>

The West simply wasted a golden opportunity to achieve an enduring and just peace in Bosnia. At Dayton the interested external powers did not achieve a just peace, but simply the best peace the West was ready to offer. In his address to the Bosnians after the conclusion of the Dayton Accord, President Izetbegovic conceded that this was the case. "This may not be a just peace, but it is more just than a continuation of war. . . In the world as it is, a better peace could not have been achieved."<sup>113</sup> As Warren Bass has observed, "Dayton represented not the vindication of the liberal ideals with which Bill Clinton excoriated George Bush on the 1992 campaign trail — firm action to halt genocide, bringing war criminals to justice, tolerance, multiethnic nation-states, liberal nationalism, and the use of international and European institutions — but rather a version of the chilly realpolitik that kept the Bush administration out of Bosnia."<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>111</sup> Jan Willem Honig and Norbert Both quoted in Mark Danner, "Bosnia: The Great Betrayal," *The New York Review of Books*, March 26, 1998, p. 43.

<sup>112</sup> Richard Holbrooke quoted in Mark Danner, "'Operation Storm,'" *The New York Review of Books*, October 22, 1998, p. 75.

<sup>113</sup> David Rieff, "Almost Justice," *The New Republic*, July 6, 1998, p. 37.

<sup>114</sup> Warren Bass, *op cit.*, p. 96.

#### **D. THE MATRIX**

The fourth step of the five-step analysis consists of a simplified graphical representation of the Bosnian case. The matrix in Figure 2 has been constructed so that each of the three functions of the major decision makers correlates with one of the three main types of failures the thesis has analyzed. The three echelons selected are broad and therefore involve a high level of generalization, but their selection is consistent with Huntington's three layers of the fault line conflict analysis scheme.

The tertiary level includes not only the national security decision-making organizations but also the relevant international organizations. In the Bosnian case this level includes countries such as the United States, France, Britain, Germany, and Russia and relevant international and European organizations such as the UN, NATO, and the EC. It also includes individuals with significant influence on decision-making such as presidents, prime ministers, diplomats, and intelligence community and military officials, as well as high-level UN, EC, and NATO officials.

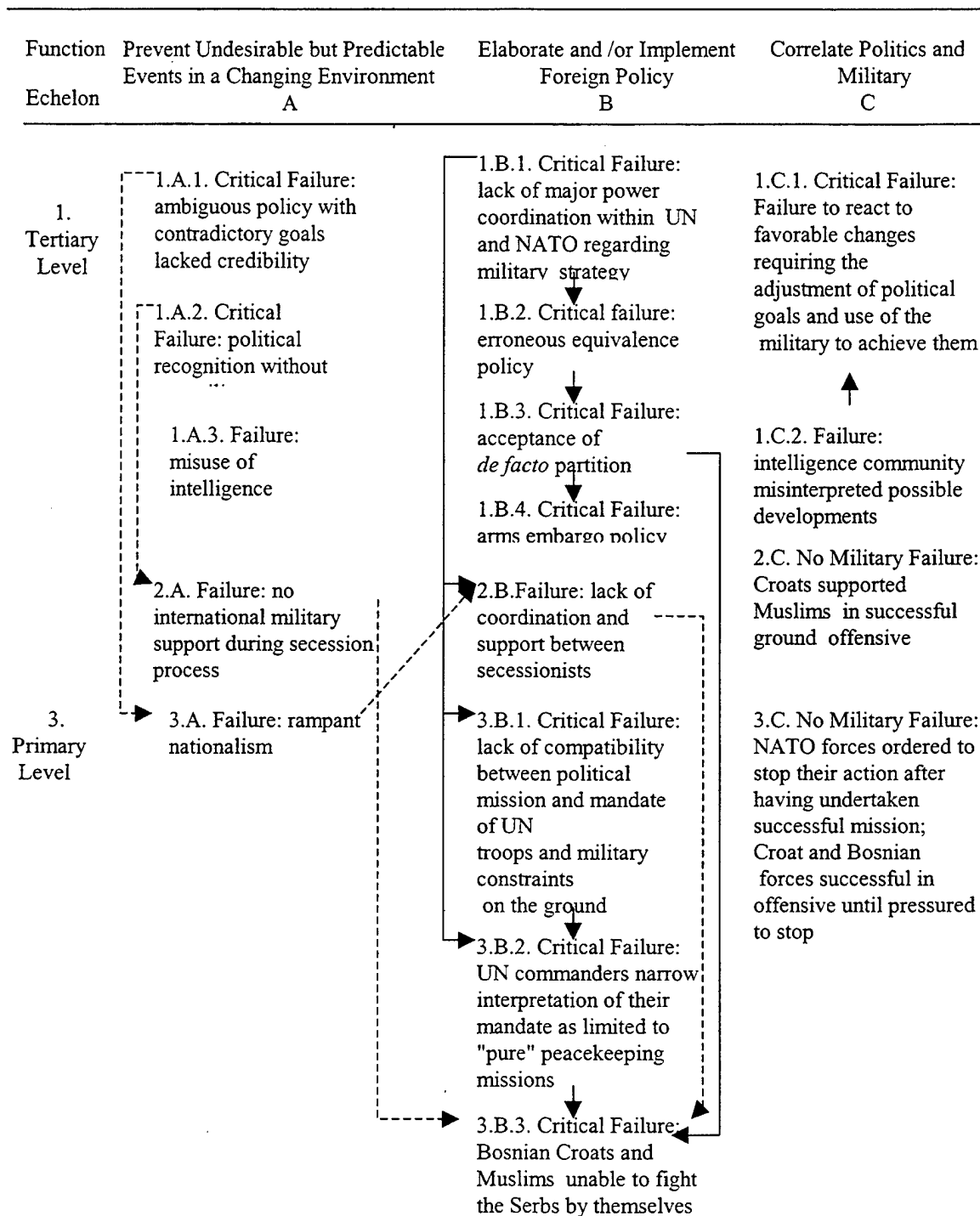
The secondary level includes the two "kin" countries involved in the Bosnian war, Croatia and Serbia, as well as the two leaders of these countries, Presidents Tudjman and Milosevic.

The primary level consists of the three warring parties in the Bosnian war, the Bosnian Serbs, the Bosnian Croats, and the Bosnian Muslims. It also includes the UN troops on Bosnian territory and the NATO forces that undertook missions in support of the UN.

With so many actors the matrix could easily get overpopulated. To avoid that, Figure 2 simply identifies the tertiary, secondary, and primary levels without specifically mentioning who is responsible for specific failures. The matrix includes only the most fundamental and important decisions and indicates only the most obvious links in the pathways to misfortune.

#### **E. PATHWAYS TO MISFORTUNE**

Tracking pathways to misfortune might oversimplify some relationships among failures, but this approach constitutes a useful device for analyzing military misfortunes.



LEGEND: Arrows indicate causal links. Solid lines indicate primary pathways; dashed lines, secondary pathways.

Figure 2. Pathways to Misfortune Matrix



This exercise requires us to interpret the arrows in the analytical matrix represented in Figure 2, which indicates relationships among various failures.

The critical pathway to misfortune comes in the column headed "Elaborate and/or Implement Foreign Policy." It is owing to failures at all levels that the Serbs were not effectively opposed by military force. The boxes from 1.B.1. through 1.B.2, 1.B.3., 1.B.4., 2.B., 3.B.1, and 3.B.2 to box 3.B.3. combine into the long chain of Western failures to learn. Then we note a secondary pathway from the tertiary level boxes 1.A.1. and 1.A.2. that eventually also leads to the primary level box 3.B.3. The misleading message the United States, the UN, and the Europeans sent to the warring parties in Bosnia resulted in a lack of coordination among parties on the same side and complicated the work of the military planners preparing for future Western actions in Bosnia.

The matrix demonstrates that we must hold the tertiary level responsible for the catastrophic failure in Bosnia. The top national and international security decision-making levels are fundamentally responsible for failure under all three columns. But obviously failure under the middle column makes the most significant contribution to the catastrophe. It shows that the main problems stemmed from the West's failure to coordinate national and international forces and to elaborate and implement a sound policy in Bosnia.

Several critical failures interacted and generated lower level failures. The lack of coordination among the Western countries, the UN and NATO, and among the Western countries within the UN and NATO, long made the elaboration and implementation of a common Western policy impossible, and resulted in the West's erroneous policy of equal treatment to all the warring parties, the arms embargo, and acceptance of a *de facto* partition for a post-conflict arrangement in Bosnia. In their turn, these failures combined to generate one failure at the secondary level as well as three key failures at the primary level.

The secondary level failure demonstrates how the lack of a common policy at the tertiary level leads to the absence of such a policy at the secondary level. This failure discouraged the Bosnian Croats and Muslims from coordinating their efforts against the

common enemy, the Serbs. Until the foundation of their Federation in March 1994 they had even fiercely fought each other.

The primary level displays three key failures generated by critical failures at the tertiary level. The failure of the interested external powers to find a common policy and military strategy in Bosnia generated two failures at the level of the UN troops on the ground. First, the UN commanders on the scene applied their mandate narrowly because of the mistaken judgement that they had not been authorized to engage in peace enforcement. Political ambiguity made the military fear crossing the "Mogadishu line" that supposedly separates peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions. Second, the mandate of the UN troops and their missions were in total disagreement. Although they were assigned missions such as protecting the "safe areas," their mandate ignored the military requirements of such missions in the particular Yugoslav environment. Along with the failures in the tertiary level boxes 1.B.1. and 1.B.3., two other critical failures of the tertiary level — the ill-conceived Western arms embargo, and the equivalence policy — deprived the Bosnian Croats and Muslims of the means necessary for their legitimate self-defense while indirectly creating a significant advantage for the Serbs, who were much less affected by the arms embargo. These failures diverted the West's attention from the real villain in the Bosnian war, the Serbs.

The secondary pathway to misfortune in the matrix also demonstrates that the tertiary level must be held responsible for generating failures at lower levels or for at least initiating them. It stems from the tertiary level boxes 1.A.1. and 1.A.2., goes through boxes 2.A. and 3.A., transcends columns, goes through box 2.B., and eventually leads to box 3.B.3. of the primary level in the middle column under "Elaborate and/or Implement Foreign Policy." The West's critical failure to back up militarily its diplomatic recognition of Slovene, Croat and Bosnian independence affected the capability of the secessionist countries to face Serb military counter-measures. The other critical failure under the heading "Prevent Undesirable but Predictable Events in a Changing Environment," the West's ambiguous and contradictory policy, generated or at least favored the escalation of the rampant nationalism in all three Bosnian communities. Failure to stop the escalation of nationalism at this level affected the secondary level

where, under such circumstances, there was little scope even for coordination between parties confronting the same main enemy. As the matrix indicates, this failure eventually led to the failure in box 3.B.3.

Given the disastrous performance of the UN, Bosnian Croat, and Bosnian Muslim troops, it is little wonder that “all roads lead to Rome” by eventually drawing us down to the critical failure in box 3.B.3. This box represents the primary level actors’ lack of effectiveness when dealing with the Serbs. Furthermore, Figure 2 allows us to see that failure is not homogeneous and that pathways of misfortune cross boundaries to affect separate decision making functions and levels of command.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The most recent episode of the Bosnian saga is the story of a defeat of justice. Noel Malcolm has called it "a triumph of diplomacy over foreign policy."<sup>1</sup> All parties emerged from the Bosnian crisis with the feeling that their interests were respected, at least in the form of the lesser evil. But the main Western powers failed to devise an enduring peace for Bosnia. Ironically, "this disaster the diplomats called a victory."<sup>2</sup> However, this analysis of the Bosnian war allows us to draw several conclusions.

First, as Noel Malcolm has pointed out, "looking back at the history of this war, one sees that the real causes of Bosnia's destruction have come from outside Bosnia itself, and have done so twice over: first in the form of the political strategy of the Serbian leadership, and then in the form of the miscomprehension and fatal interference of the leaders of the West."<sup>3</sup> The Western powers failed to understand the specificity of the distinctive Bosnian entity. This flawed understanding subordinated centuries of unity to the relatively recent split of the Bosnians into three communities in the nineteenth century. The Bosnians had lived together for centuries with no more violence among them than among peoples in other European countries, even though they had gradually adhered to different sets of values: Catholic, Orthodox, and Islamic. It was only in the late nineteenth century that the conflicting interests of external powers from these three traditions that were seeking dominance in Bosnia encouraged Bosnians to falsely identify themselves with three ethnic groups. The West's acceptance of a *de facto* partition of Bosnia at Dayton constitutes a significant failure.

After a fifty-year interruption, one that perpetuated a false approach to national identity, a period in which Communists had unsuccessfully tried to solve the problem of the nationalities in Yugoslavia by replacing ethnicity with class allegiance, the diverging interests of countries from three different traditions clashed once again in Bosnia. Nationalism naturally escalated at the end of oppressive Communism.

---

<sup>1</sup> Noel Malcolm, "Bosnia and the West: A Study in Failure," *The National Interest*, No. 39 (Spring 1995), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> David Rieff, *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), p. 251.

The West Europeans were split between, on the one hand, the French and the British, who “impartially” presided over the violent partition of Bosnia by the Serbs and Croats, and on the other hand, the Germans, the Austrians, and the Italians, who supported anything that could favor Croatia and the Bosnian Croat community in the partition process. The Russians supported the Serbs in their attempt to carve as much as possible from Bosnia when the Serbs realized they could no longer prevent its secession with political means. For their part, the Islamic partners of the United States — and other Islamic states — were supporting the interests of — or at least were watching closely, the developments regarding — the Muslim community in Bosnia.

The West initially responded with an ambiguous policy that supported two goals that were contradictory in the circumstances in Yugoslavia after Tito's death. The West supported both democratization and the preservation of the unity of Yugoslavia. But the two goals were incompatible since the former encouraged disintegration, while the latter was anti democratic.

After it had failed to prevent the war, the West also failed to take appropriate action to end it. The Western powers responded with a lack of coordination that fathered a sinuous policy that treated all warring parties equally. This flawed policy resulted in an ill-conceived arms embargo that favored the stronger Serbs and promoted an eventual acceptance of a *de facto* partition of Bosnia.

Several examples demonstrate that the Western failure in Bosnia was an organizational failure. First, the self-induced paralysis through the UN and NATO offered the Europeans, the Americans, and the other interested external powers a perfect inter-blocking capability. Indeed, the crisis found a solution only when one party prevailed over the others. That is, the Americans prevailed over the Europeans; and NATO, supporting the American vision, prevailed over the UN.

Second, the United States intervened despite its original unwillingness to do so. NATO had formally approved Op-Plan 40-104 that implied U.S. involvement in the crisis. In other words, only the NATO mechanism and the stake of the existence of the Alliance itself obliged the United States to intervene along with the other members and according to the rules of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Third, individuals played limited roles in the resolution of the Bosnian crisis. Despite his declarations during the 1992 presidential campaign, President Clinton followed the same *Realpolitik* that had kept President Bush away from involving U.S. troops in Bosnia. Yet he eventually committed U.S. military forces in spite of this reluctance. But this was only when, as a result of the Dole bill, the Congress threatened to take foreign policy leadership away from the White House.

Fourth, the example of Generals Rose and Smith should be considered. While General Rose was reluctant to take any vigorous action against the Bosnian Serbs, General Smith tried to bring about a dramatic change in the UN's approach toward the Serbs. But the UN initially rejected his strategy. Yet, when the functioning of the UN-NATO relationship changed, the UN troops could withdraw from the areas that had made them vulnerable to the Serbian "hostage-taking" policy and NATO airplanes could strike vigorously. In other words, General Smith's strategy was then being applied.

Flawed policies and poor coordination between political and military leaders generate bad military strategies. The initial UN military intervention in Bosnia reflected the "equivalence" policy the West had adopted toward the warring parties by engaging the UN troops only in humanitarian and peacekeeping missions. Since the politicians did not want to take any serious action against the Bosnian Serbs, the military could not take any specific military action. The politicians even ignored fundamental military requirements. They tasked the UN troops with a mission they had neither the means nor the mandate to undertake: to defend the "safe areas" against military aggression. When the policy changed, the military strategy changed: NATO airplanes struck Serb targets. The military carried out the change in policy in September-October 1995. They performed successful operations until the politicians stopped them, even though a clear military victory against the Serbs was at hand.

Until a late stage in the conflict, the Western powers failed to include the Croats and the Bosnian Croats and Muslims in their military plans regarding the conflict's resolution. The Bosnian government never in fact asked for Western soldiers to risk their

lives on Bosnian soil.<sup>4</sup> It had only asked for the right to self-defense long denied by the Western arms embargo policy. Properly armed, and given limited assistance from the air, the Bosnians could have regained the territory themselves. Moreover, when they eventually mounted the September-October 1995 offensive in cooperation with the Croats, the Western politicians flatly told them to stop it. The truth was that military means matter, but none of the West's diplomats wanted to admit that only the use of force could stop the war.

Finally, the duration of the peace the Dayton Accord has brought is questionable for several reasons. First, it is a peace imposed from above that has been accepted by all parties only under Western, notably American, pressure. The Bosnian Serb representatives did not sign it, but President Milosevic did, with little concern for their preferences. Second, it does not represent justice and stability but rather a balance of power among external actors rather than among the local belligerents. Finally, it heavily relies upon the continued presence of Western troops on Bosnian soil. Moreover, while the military measures are being accomplished, the civilian measures an enduring peace demands are far from being implemented. Therefore, only the long-term presence of Western troops may provide a chance for recovery to a nation with little sense of national identity. But will the Western powers, notably the United States, be willing to pay this price?

---

<sup>4</sup> Noel Malcolm. "Bosnia and the West: A Study in Failure," in *The National Interest*, No. 39 (Spring 1995), p. 14.

## INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1. Defense Technical Information Center.....2  
8725 John J. Kingman Rd., STE 0944  
Ft. Belvoir, Virginia 22060/6218
  
2. Dudley Knox Library.....2  
Naval Postgraduate School  
411 Dyer Rd.  
Monterey, California 93943-5101
  
3. Prof. David Yost.....2  
Department of National Security Affairs  
Naval Postgraduate School  
411 Dyer Rd.  
Monterey, California 93943
  
4. Prof. Donald Abenheim.....2  
Department of National Security Affairs  
Naval Postgraduate School  
411 Dyer Rd.  
Monterey, California 93943
  
5. Geneva Center for Security Policy.....1  
7 bis, Avenue de la Paix  
P.O. Box 1295  
1211 Geneva 1  
Switzerland
  
6. Amt für Studien und Übungen der Bundeswehr.....1  
Schaumburgweg 3  
51545 Waldbröl  
Germany
  
7. Bundesministerium der Verteidigung .....1  
Fü S I 5  
Postfach 13 28  
53003 Bonn  
Germany
  
8. Major I.G. Peter Schneider.....1  
Nibelungenstr. 22  
51674 Wiehl  
Germany



9. Lieutenant Commander Gheorghe Anghel.....	2
Ministerul Apararii Nationale	
Izvor 3-5	
Sector 5	
Bucharest	
Romania	